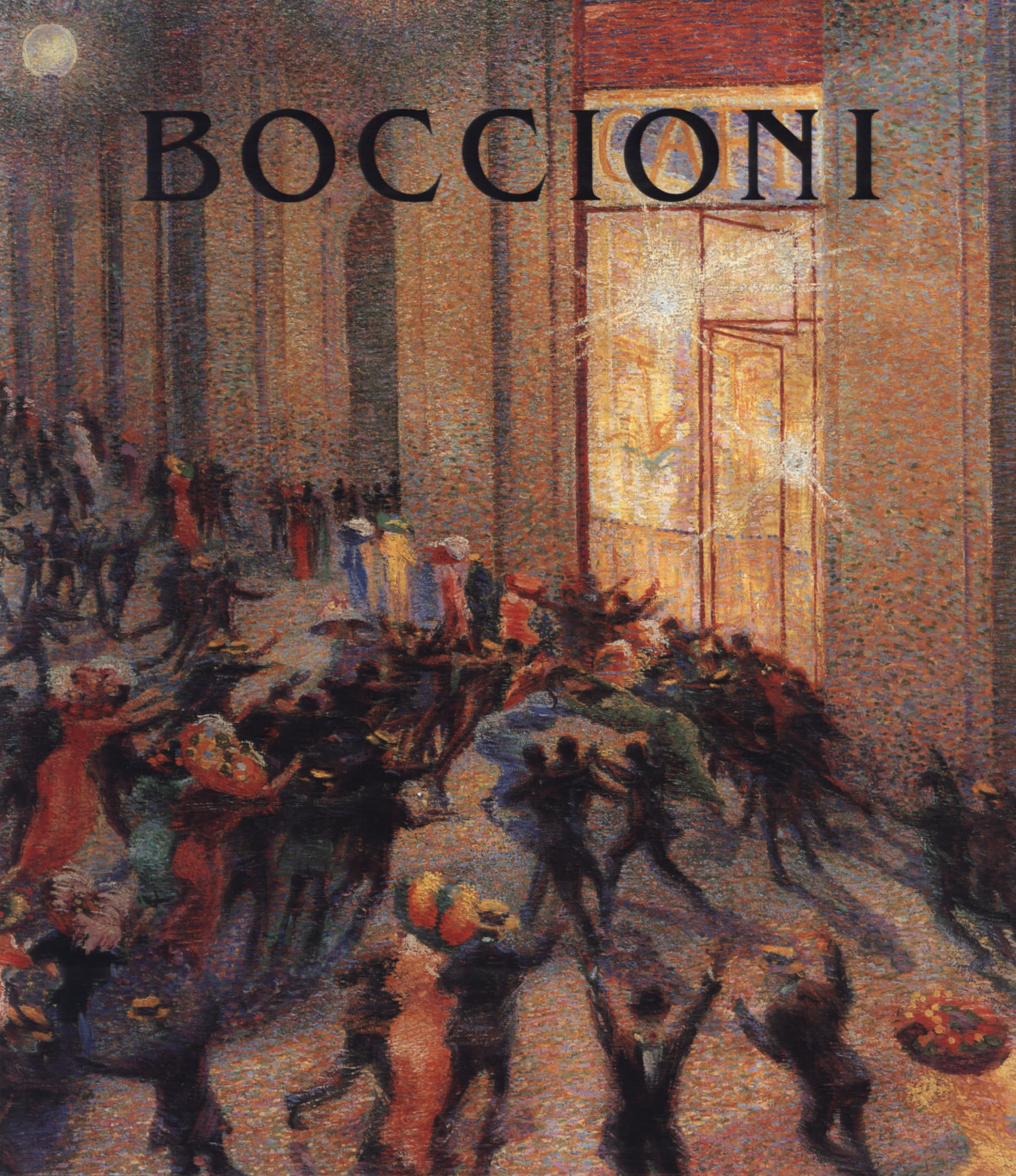
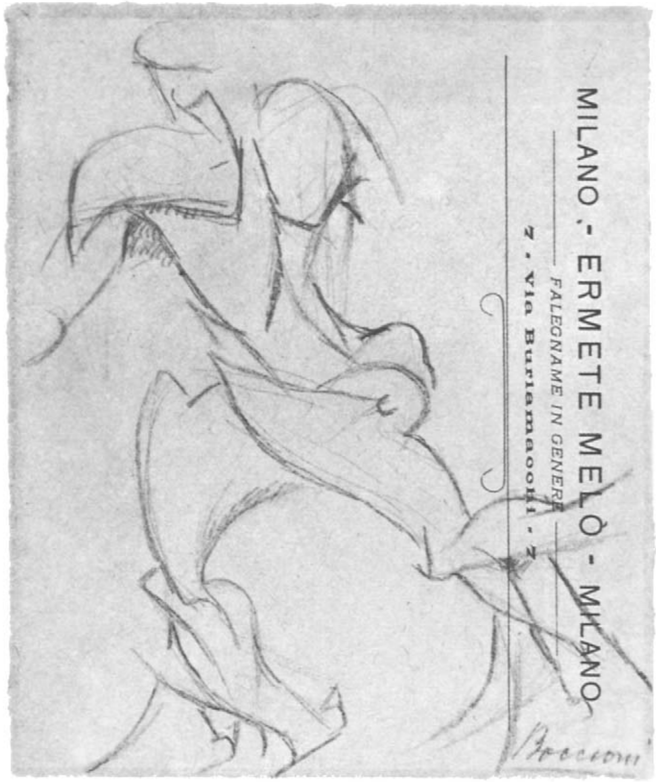
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UMBERTO BOCCIONI

ESTER COEN

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Boccioni: A Retrospective,* held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art from September 15, 1988, to January 8, 1989.

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Director's Foreword

The Metropolitan Museum's commitment to collecting and exhibiting twentieth-century art has been confirmed with the opening of the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing. *Boccioni: A Retrospective* is the first exhibition comprised of international loans organized by the Department of 20th-Century Art to be shown in the Wallace Wing's galleries. It inaugurates a program of scholarly exhibitions focusing on major figures and movements in twentieth-century art.

Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) is best known as perhaps the leading exponent of Futurism. This is the first exhibition in the United States devoted to documenting Boccioni's complete achievement as an artist: his early landscapes and portraits; his Expressionist and Symbolist experiments and his observations of the industrial urban scene; and his heroic development of Futurism. It affords an unprecedented opportunity to evaluate the artist through his paintings, sculptures, drawings, and etchings.

William S. Lieberman, Chairman of the Department of 20th-Century Art, initiated this exhibition, and it profited greatly from his expertise and guidance. Ester Coen, an authority on Boccioni, has acted as consultant to the exhibition and has written the substantive catalogue. She has also given important assistance in securing loans from abroad.

I would like to give particular thanks to the members of the Museum staff who have contributed to the organization of the exhibition and to the publication of its catalogue: Mahrukh Tarapor, Assistant Director, who played a major role in the planning stages and negotiated important loans; Anne L. Strauss, Research Assistant, Department of 20th-Century Art, who dealt with all aspects of the project with exemplary care and skill; Kathleen Howard, Senior Editor, who shaped the exhibition catalogue; Daniel Berger, who gave much-appreciated assistance in Rome; and Gabriella Befani Canfield, Assistant Museum Educator, for her efforts in organizing the lecture program.

A great debt is owed to the lenders; without their participation this retrospective, in which a number of works are exhibited for the first time in the United States, could not have been assembled.

The collaboration with our colleagues in Italy has been marked by generosity and good will; their invaluable support secured many essential loans. Among those who have our deep gratitude are:

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This exhibition has been made possible by EniChem Americas Inc., without whose generosity it could not have taken place. We would like to extend our special thanks to Alfredo de Marzio, President and Chief Executive Officer of this corporation. Additional support has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Italian Cultural Institute, and the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. An indemnity has been granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art dedicates this catalogue to Lydia Winston Malbin, one of the foremost American collectors of twentieth-century art. We are most pleased to honor her extraordinary discernment and her unfailing commitment to making a wider public familiar with modern works, especially those of the Futurists.

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Philippe de Montebello, Director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for having enthusiastically agreed to the Boccioni retrospective proposed by William S. Lieberman, Chairman of the Museum's Department of 20th-Century Art. Mr. Lieberman has my deep thanks for having conceived this exhibition. Mahrukh Tarapor, Assistant Director, has given me valuable assistance in the planning and the realization of this exhibition. Anne L. Strauss, Research Assistant, Department of 20th-Century Art, has been an indispensable collaborator. I am also especially appreciative of the efforts of Kay Bearman, Salvatore Porcellati, Ida Balboul, and Rochelle J. Cohen of the Department of 20th-Century Art.

I thank John P. O'Neill, Editor in Chief, for his energetic participation in the creation of the catalogue. This publication owes much to the critical sensibility of Kathleen Howard, Senior Editor, and to the elegant design of Gerald Pryor. Heidi Colsman-Freyberger contributed important bibliographical information.

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Giuliano Briganti encouraged me with valuable advice. I am grateful to Maurizio Calvesi, who initiated me into the study of Umberto Boccioni; to Zeno Birolli for his useful suggestions; and to Angelica Zander Rudenstine and Robert Rosenblum for their generous support. I owe a special debt to the late Giuseppe Sprovieri, an unforgettable participant in the Futurist years.

Particular gratitude is also due to Giuseppe and Licia Dal Pian Boccioni, members of the artist's family; to Massimo Carrà; to Vittoria, Ala, and Luce Marinetti, to Gina Severini, and to Angelo Calmarini for making documentary material available; and to Luciano Pollini for giving me photographic material.

My personal thanks go to Bruno Bottai for his active support of this exhibition.

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Di Carlo, Fiammetta Gaetani d'Aragona, Luisa Laureati, Massimo Simonetti, and the Studio AZ, Milan, for having helped me to obtain important loans.

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Ester Coen

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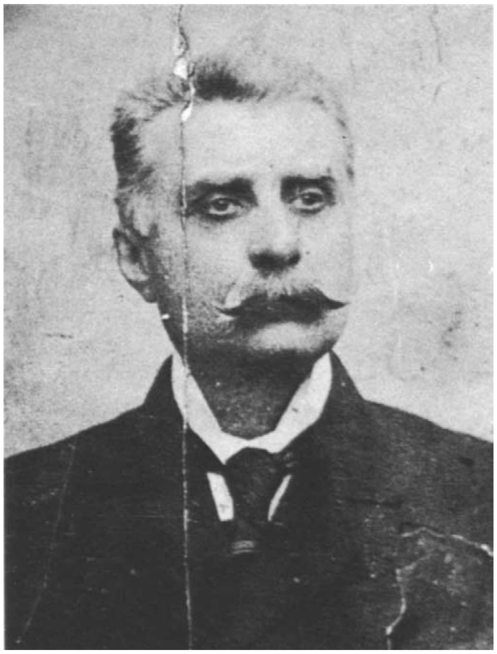
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Raffaele Boccioni, the artist's father, 1903.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua



Cecilia Forlani Boccioni, the artist's mother, 1899.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua



Umberto Boccioni as a young child.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua

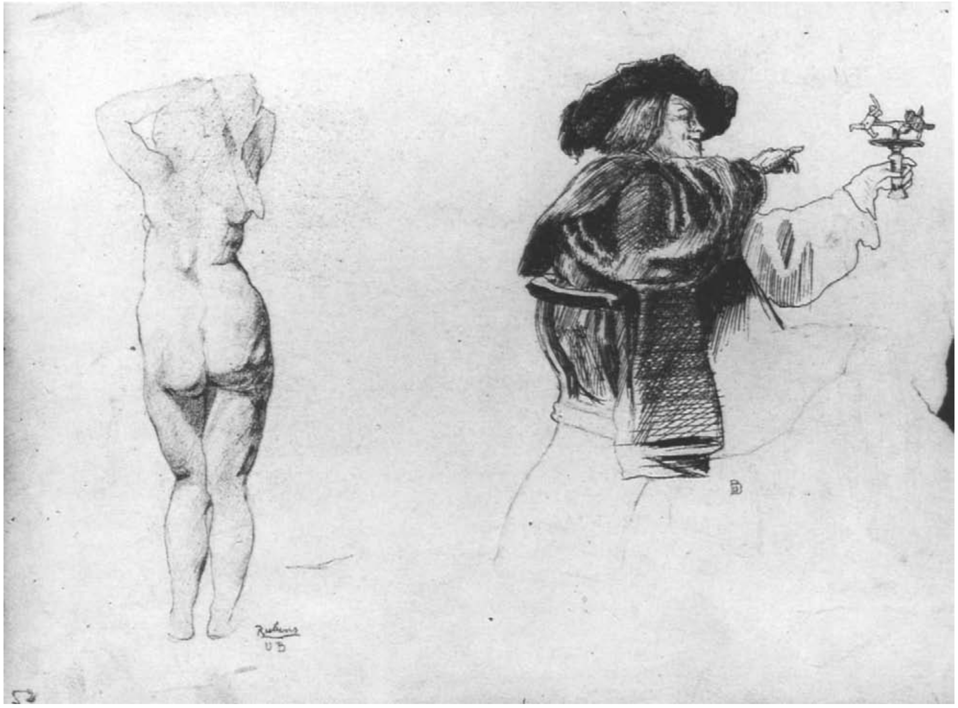
Umberto Boccioni

Umberto Boccioni was born in Reggio Calabria on October 19, 1882. His family was from the Romagna region in Northern Italy, but his father, a minor government employee, was never posted in one place for long. Soon after the boy's birth (he had an older sister, Amelia), the family moved to Forlì in the Romagna, then to Genoa on the western coast, and later to Padua on the other side of the peninsula. In 1897, at fifteen, Umberto followed his father to Catania in Sicily, where he finished his schooling—presumably irregular and varying in quality because of the family's many moves—and began to develop an interest in literature. After 1898 he settled in Rome to attend courses in drawing at the Scuola Libera del Nudo.

Boccioni's Roman years are still poorly documented, but some episodes can be reconstructed from *Tutta la vita di un pittore* (1948–68), the autobiography written by Gino Severini (1883–1966). The two young artists were introduced by another young painter, Basilici, about 1900 during a musical evening at the Villa Borghese. They shared the same sense of rebellion and the thirst for new knowledge and for direct experiences: "We agreed, evidently, on all points, and on Nietzsche especially our enthusiasms were the same."

At the time, as Severini recalled more than four decades later, their reading was oriented toward a humanitarian socialism: "Books and pamphlets by Karl Marx, Bakunin, Engels, Labriola. . . . The relationship between the artist and society didn't interest us much; nevertheless the general Marxist principle, according to which 'man is the product of his environment,' drove us if not to become formally interested in politics, at least to accept its influence, in the socialist and communist forms that were beginning to be taken seriously. One should keep in mind that we were living in a period of social upheaval, of demands and class struggle, of strikes put down with violence, and we fully experienced all of this with the enthusiasm of youth, the desire for 'social justice,' and with the deep emotional sympathy for the oppressed and indignation toward the rulers so characteristic of young people."

It was in that frame of mind that Boccioni announced to his mother in a letter of March 9, 1901, that he had composed an "epico-historico-erotico-tragicomic poem *CARCEREIDE*" [from *carcere*, prison] and a story in three chapters titled *Sufferings of the Soul*. Further, he proclaimed himself an "atheistical-skeptical-materialistical philosopher." In that same vein of mingled irony and outrage that would always mark him, he wrote a mock denunciation of the art of the past to his friend: "Dear Signor Severini, I give you this comforting news: In Rome, in the other cities of Italy, and Abroad, public meetings are being held requesting permission to throw into the Tiber and into the similar rivers of other cities all of the Madonnas existing in the museums and churches. . . . As for myself, I



Umberto Boccioni, studies from Rubens and Hals(?), 1902–1903. Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private collection, Padua



Umberto Boccioni, 1904. Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

swear to you . . . that I await trembling and sighing this high manifestation of contemporary mystic art" (September 2, 1902).

That same expressive violence and will to revolutionize the present that characterize Boccioni's youthful literary efforts are still found eight years later in the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* (February 11, 1910): "Out with you, then, bought-and-sold restorers of hack paintings! Out with you, archaeologists infected with chronic necrophilia! Out, critics, you complaisant panderers! Out, gouty academics, besotted and ignorant professors! Out!"

Boccioni's impetuosity, intellectual liveliness, and critical and rebellious spirit contributed substantially to the formation of the Futurist group. A group of sketches recently discovered among his papers shows the young Boccioni, eager to explore and learn and endowed with a deeply analytic spirit. He made dozens of studies after earlier paintings (copies from Pontormo, Rubens, and Leonardo) and dozens of studies of nudes in academic poses. These show that his rebellion and revolution against past and present had a precise foundation: thorough knowledge of earlier art and a methodical study of past forms.

"In the meantime Boccioni, who had a nose for persons of real worth," reports Severini, "had discovered Balla, only recently back from Paris and fully imbued with the ideas of Impressionism. It was Giacomo Balla, once he became our teacher, who initiated us into the new modern technique of 'Divisionism' without teaching us its fundamental rules. Giacomo Balla was an absolutely serious man, deeply reflective. . . . a painter in the broadest sense of the word. Following the example of the French painters, he had a single-minded love of nature, demanding from it all inspiration, even to excess. If an old shoe was lying in



Umberto Boccioni, study from Pontormo, 1902–1903. Private collection. Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan



Umberto Boccioni, *Ciociara,* 1904. Private collection

a landscape he would have painted that too. . . . Balla painted with separate and contrasting colors, like the French painters; his 'pictorial quality' was first-rate, genuine, something like the material and quality of a Pissarro. It was a great stroke of luck for us to meet such a man, whose direction was decisive for all our careers. The atmosphere of Italian painting at that moment was the foulest and most harmful imaginable."

Giacomo Balla (1871–1958) was then best known in Roman art circles as a portraitist. A very refined painter, he learned from the French Post-Impressionists to divide his colors into minuscule, superimposed brushstrokes and to apply that technique to isolated fragments of reality, distorting the composition with highly personal, camera-like foreshortenings. In Balla's studio Severini and Boccioni learned from the more expert artist "truthfulness of method, Divisionism, study from life without preconceptions, and that love for the hostility of the public that would later unite us in the Futurist struggle."

At times Boccioni expressed a desire to break away from Balla's still too realistic painting: "His work was impersonal and solitary, of an almost mystical severity. We young ones—Sironi, Boccioni, Severini—were drawn to him" (unpublished article, 1916). He did, however, value Balla's judgment. On September 7, 1902, he wrote to Severini: "I feel for landscape what I would almost call a fever. I dream only of large canvases and think only of luminous landscapes, yet I lack canvas, I lack paints, I lack good health. . . . I took my landscape to Balla and it pleased him greatly. I asked him why he says our works are always going along well, and he replied that, not being able to see the original view, he cannot make all the observations called for. If he says 'Good! Good! Keep it up! Keep it up!'

he does so because he sees progress in the choice of lines, in the coloring, and in the general tonality."

Balla started the young Boccioni toward that colorism of complementaries that would take on ever more dramatic and violent values. And Balla transmitted to him the love for landscape and nature that would remain a constant in his pictorial work. In the letter of September 7, 1902, quoted above, Boccioni also stated: "I remember that in matters of black and white, where there are no colors and the arrangement of planes must be exactly right and can be judged even without knowing the model, he always has something to say," thus emphasizing Balla's attention to composition and arrangement of planes. These pictorial elements would be exploited and even exaggerated in Boccioni's later work. But the young artist had not created his own stylistic language; thus few works can be securely placed in this period. If few dated paintings are known, there are many studies, tempera sketches, and publicity posters.

Severini recalled that in Rome Boccioni "lived with his father in an uncle's house and in fact told me that his father, to second him in his desire to devote himself to art, sent him for lessons with one of those poster painters who defaced the city's walls around 1900. This pseudo-painter made him copy his horrible posters, and it was those drawings, one uglier than the next, that he showed me. . . . It called for neither great knowledge nor special intellectual capacities to see that that was a wrong path." Describing the cultural environment in which they lived, Severini added: "In Rome, where life went along blissful and quiet, the ones who won out were Lionne, Innocenti, Coromaldi, Arturo Noci, etc., etc. In that milieu of vulgarity, of banality, and of mediocrity, the severe personality of our Balla stood out. Following his example and in reaction to that milieu, my works and Boccioni's became increasingly aggressive and violent; both of us had made progress."

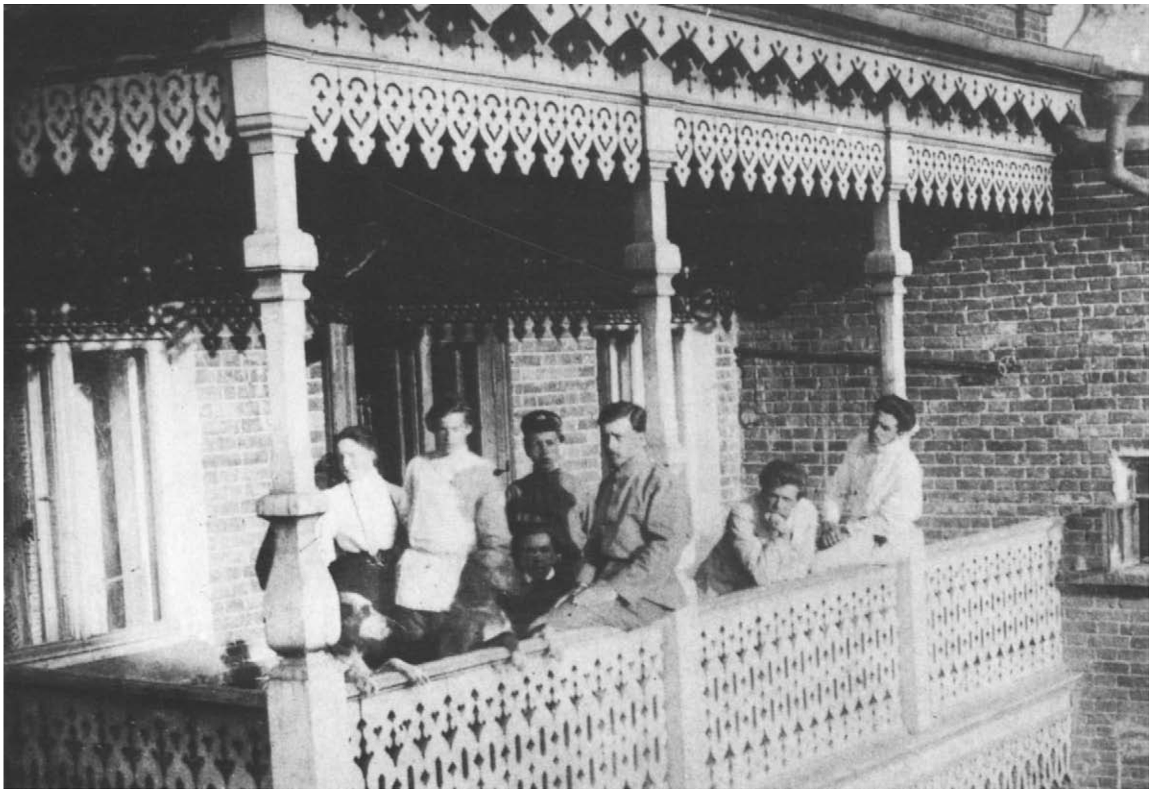
The Roman art world was still tied to nineteenth-century formulas, and painting followed the general taste for a gloomy realism. In those years the Roman artists showed their works annually at the Società degli Amatori e Cultori. These were official exhibitions held in the society's headquarters on Via Nazionale where the latest efforts of Italian and foreign artists were selected by a commission of judges. Boccioni showed there for four years, from 1903 to 1906. In 1905 the artists turned down by the jury organized their own "Salon des Refusés" in a theater lobby, and Boccioni, together with Severini, showed there even though one of his paintings—a self-portrait (no. 4; Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York)—had been accepted for the official exhibition.

In the spring of 1906, tired of the provincial life of the Italian capital, the artist managed to scrape together enough money to escape to Paris. In a long letter to his mother and sister he described the journey, his first impressions of a new city, his sensations and emotions. In the small number of works he painted during his few months in Paris, his palette became livelier and his brushwork more assured; the structure of his work became more complicated, and space was represented with greater authority.

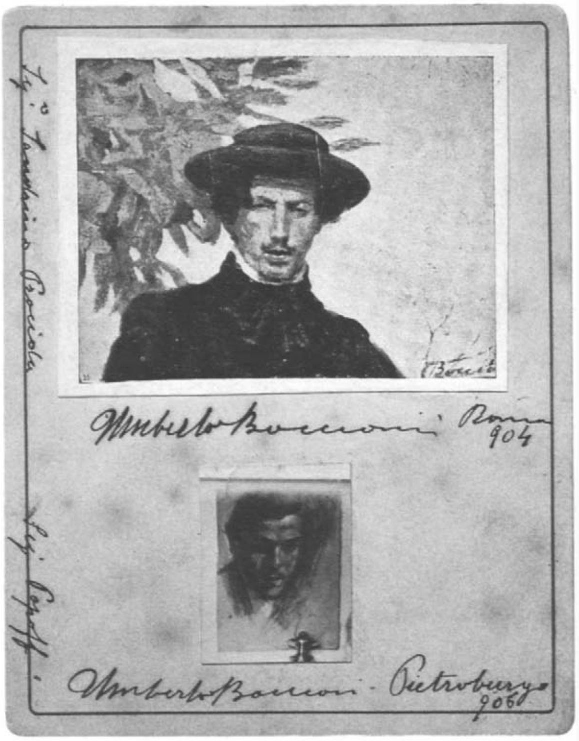
Late in August he left for Russia on the invitation of friends he met in Paris. He was the guest of the Popoff family in Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad) and painted a portrait of Sophie Popoff. After a month's stay he went to Moscow for a few days, then to Saint Petersburg. In November he was in Warsaw: "Warsaw, believe me, was terrible," he wrote to his father on December 4, on his return to Italy. "Soldiers, guards, Cossacks, artillery fire, rifle fire, everything on the streets in continuous movement! Every government house

under guard, every corner patrolled, continual orders to keep walking, to raise one's arms for frisking, etc. In four days I saw innumerable arrests, crowds, people stopped and pistol-whipped across the face. . . . Once when I was walking with my coat buttoned up an official shouted at me to undo myself and show myself unbuttoned. Having observed that I had nothing on me, he allowed me to go on. I was already able to stammer in Russian, but there I always spoke French, which I now can speak like Italian."

Returning to Italy in December, Boccioni settled in Padua where his mother and sister were living. He soon found life in that small city suffocating, as he recorded in the diary he kept from January 1907 through August 1908. With almost obsessive regularity he questioned himself on the meaning of his painting and expressed the desire to find new forms that abandoned the modes and subjects of the past. This anxiety over things new and old was accompanied by a growing need to detach himself from Balla's teaching. In a letter to Severini written in October or November 1907, Boccioni wrote that Balla "wanted to stride forward without seeing that he was surrounded by a closed wall. His stopping too often to observe a leaf made him forget that birds were singing over his head. The clouds roll on and on; the butterflies chase each other and make love. . . . He catches marvelously that chance tone of the leaf, but his feeling rests there, circumscribed, cold, isolated. . . . His universe does not throb! The nostalgia for what does not exist, for what perhaps never existed, that will never exist, is not satisfied! You keep on both suffering and wanting even while you are contemplating his work: That is why he is not *great*, why to my mind he is on the wrong path!"



The Popoff house in Tsaritsyn, 1906.
Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan



Umberto Boccioni, card with a self-portrait and a drawing, ca. 1906. Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private collection, Padua



Boccioni's sister, Amelia. Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private collection, Padua

Yet the break with Balla's example, with his "Divisionist verism," would come about very slowly: "Balla is losing sway over me, but I am far from liberating myself entirely from him," Boccioni wrote in his diary on March 28, 1907. He had begun to tire of studies from life: "I am fed up with fields and little houses." More and more he sought the element of innovation.

There are almost daily notes in Boccioni's diaries about his working method, his progress, his difficulties: "I am beginning to make my eye linger less over details, to the advantage of the whole." These words, written in March 1907, show him already interested in broadening the field of vision in his painting. In the months following his return to Padua he deepened his explorations, especially in Luminism; his study of the fall of light and of chromatic combinations becomes more and more evident.

By April 1907 Boccioni was in Venice; there he made his first tentative experiments in etching, and he also thought more deeply about bringing to art new formal solutions: "In the work of art the veristic details, I would say, are nothing else than the point of contact, the bridge the artist places between his idea and the world. At that point everyone understands, though in their own fashion, so that little by little the artist has led everyone to where he wishes" (diary, June 15, 1907). In August 1907 he decided to settle in Milan; the possibility of a second visit to Russia evaporated, and he rushed off first to Brescia and then for a few days in September to Munich, where he visited the Sezession exhibition. In October he spent a week in Paris and saw an exhibition of Italian Divisionist painting which greatly impressed him.

On his return to Milan he began a new period of experimentation, as the pages of his diary testify. Here we read of his difficulties in translating his ideas into images: "I do not know how to transfer a literary or philosophical vision into a pictorial one. Yesterday I was struck by a doubt as to whether I had lost my love for color, since I am always falling back on drawing and neglecting the brushes. I also try this however: I don't think I want to make use of color except in things of great importance. The little impressions come to my eyes only as drawing" (September 27, 1907).

Early in March of 1908, while working on his portrait of Signora Massimino (no. 19), the troubled young artist visited Gaetano Previati (1852–1920), one of the most interesting proponents of Italian Divisionism. Of Ferrarese birth, Previati had a passion for the study of light. In the last decade of the nineteenth century he had already arrived at a studied "division" of luministic texture into filament-like signs, mostly in monochrome. His desire to transform paint into an ethereal substance led him to set down his theories in several books: *La tecnica della pittura* (1905), *I principii scientifici del Divisionismo* (1906), and *Tecnica ed Arte* (1913). Boccioni was particularly struck by *La tecnica della pittura* and by the way in which Previati had resolved his theoretical idealism in his paintings. Boccioni turned to Previati in an effort to discover new ways out of Balla's brand of Divisionism; he detached himself increasingly from Realism, seeking to arrive at a broader general vision. In an article Boccioni wrote a few months before his death, he remarked: "Previati is the only great Italian artist who has conceived of art as a representation in which visual reality serves only as a point of departure. Only this great artist had the intuition, more than thirty years ago, that art was escaping from Realism to elevate itself into style. He is greater than Segantini, who, in a somewhat elementary pantheism, had intuited the need for firmness in style but had sought it in perfection of execution, in analysis. . . . Gaetano Previati was the precursor in Italy of the idealist revolution that today is routing out realism and documented study from life. He has intuited that style commences when the conception is built upon vision. But while his vision has renewed itself in modernism, the conception, like a skeleton, remains in the old material elaborated by the Italian Renaissance" (*Gli Avvenimenti*, March 26, 1916).

In 1907–1908 Boccioni showed in the annual exhibitions sponsored by the Permanente and the Famiglia Artistica in Milan. In these years he retraveled the paths of Symbolism and Divisionism in an effort to find a different formal solution for his ideas. Besides Previati's Divisionist painting, Boccioni studied the graphic art of Aubrey Beardsley with its curvilinear design and strong contrasts of black and white; he experimented also with a palette of thick and full-bodied paint, an Expressionist matrix. He turned to Previati and Edvard Munch in the hope of freeing himself from expressive modes linked with the past. Munch represented the quality of inward analysis, which offered a formal solution to his restless thoughts. Boccioni knew the Norwegian artist's work as early as 1904 from the nine lithographs in the Amatori e Cultori exhibition, to which he himself had contributed a painting. But only in the beginning of 1907 did the young Italian approach a solution of more Northern stamp than anything he had attempted so far. This brought a more complicated vision into his design, transforming its linearism into a sinuous curvature of lines and weighting his colorism. *The Dream* is the most evident example of this passing phase: The entwined bodies of Paolo and Francesca turn and twist in a spasmodic embrace above an undefined magma wherein rise the faces of the damned, distorted by a hopeless suffering.

Boccioni would persist in this vein until 1910. *Mourning* represented his last and most successful attempt at an advanced Expressionism. The drama of the subject is charged with a profound rawness, in both the sudden stabs of bright reds and yellows in the flowers and hair and the desperate deformation of the faces drowned in pain, repeated in a deliberately seething black background. This venture into an Expressionist approach would continue to develop in later works where strange visions and implacable torments reappear.

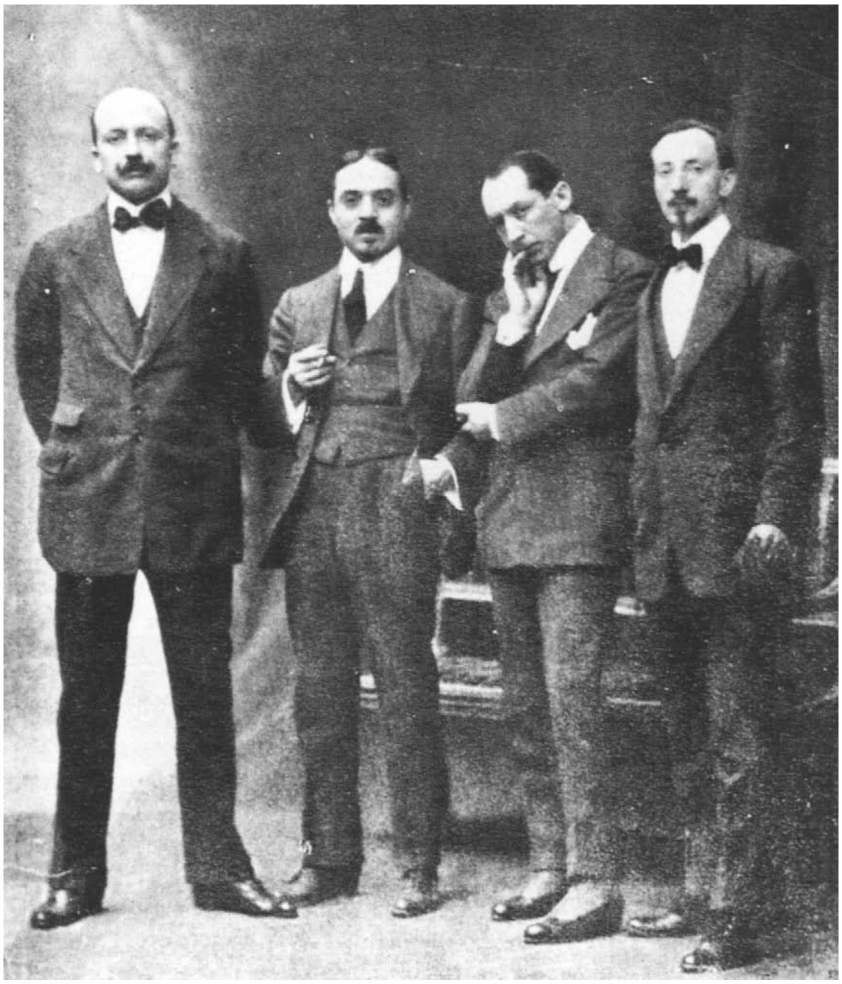
Boccioni's encounter with Futurism came after long years of study and private clarification of artistic problems. After an early phase of painting in a neo-Impressionist technique, broken up here and there by sudden brushstrokes that were more Expressionist in character, he took to distorting his forms through violent colors at the start of 1910. The influences on him were then still diverse: His search oscillated between the polished luminism of Impressionism and the coloristic and formal solutions of Expressionism.

Sometime between late 1909 and early 1910 Boccioni met Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), the first formulator of Futurism, a movement that was originally literary but would come to embrace the visual arts, music, theater, dance, cinema, and even, eventually, politics, mathematics, and cooking. For the young artist uncertain of his way, acquaintance with this polished, worldly, and highly verbal gentleman-firebrand was a fundamental step toward the creation of an art liberated from traditional formulas. In his autobiography, *La mia vita*, Carlo Carrà (1881–1966) recalled: "Boccioni, Russolo, and I met Marinetti, who was then living in Via Senato. Who could have supposed that so many things would have come out of that meeting? None of us had the remotest perception of what would happen. We were brought into a sitting room luxuriously adorned with rich Persian carpets, where Marinetti welcomed us most effusively and cordially. After a lengthy examination of the situation of art in our country we decided to launch a manifesto to young Italian artists, inviting them to shake off the lethargy that choked every legitimate aspiration. The next morning Boccioni, Russolo, and I got together in a café at Porta Vittoria, near where we all lived, and with great enthusiasm we sketched out a plan for our appeal. Drawing up the definitive version proved rather laborious: We three worked all day, and that evening, together with Marinetti and his friend Decio Cinti, secretary of the group, we completed it in all its parts, and got Bonzagni and Romani to sign it, then we turned the text over to the printer. Distributed in several thousand copies a few days later, that cry of bold and open rebellion had the effect of a violent discharge of electricity in the drab artistic sky of our country."

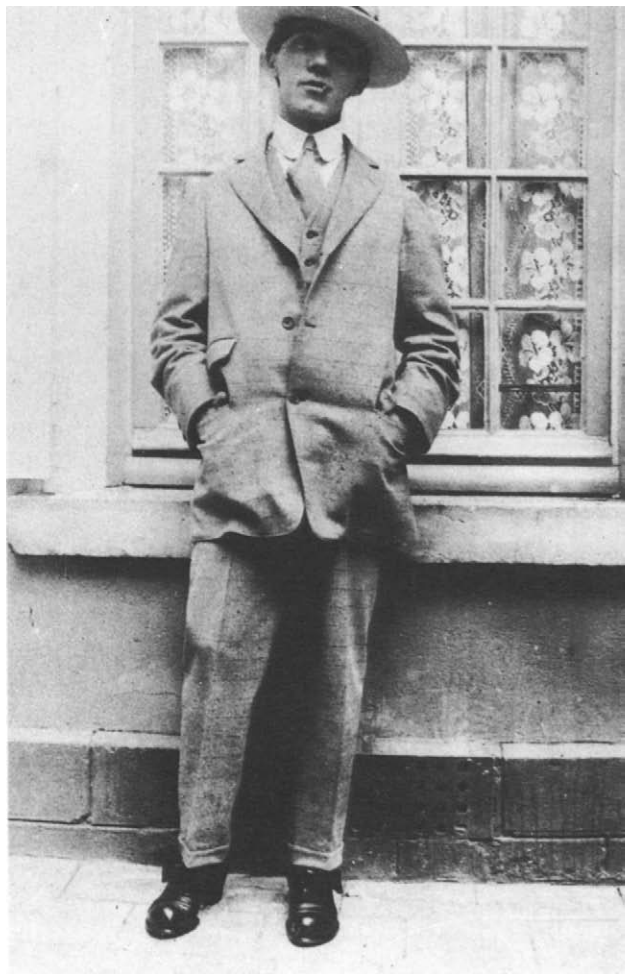
Aldo Palazzeschi, a young writer who took part in the birth of literary Futurism but soon broke with it because of disagreements with Marinetti, described the events: "In January of 1910 Umberto Boccioni introduced himself to Marinetti in his house on Via Senato in Milan, accompanied by Carlo Carrà and Luigi Russolo, with the intent of associating themselves with the poets' movement, and on the following February 11 the manifesto of Futurist painters appeared which Boccioni himself would read on the evening of March 8 at the Politeama Chiarella in Turin. On the following April 11 the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* appeared. . . . The first manifesto was also signed by two other painters, Aroldo Bonzagni and Romolo Romani, who then refused to subscribe to the second; Boccioni, speaking with lovable generosity of his apostate colleagues, declared in his book: 'More than courage, it called for heroism and an unrestrained patriotism to join with Futurism then, surrounded with ferocious hatreds, the vilest calumnies, and every sort of hostility,'

almost as if wishing to excuse their weakness by finding some justification for their refusal."

Gino Severini presented his own account: "After Boccioni returned from Russia I very rarely had news of him, so I was most happy to get his letter in, I think, 1910. In it he spoke to me about Futurism and Marinetti; my friend Lugné-Poë, director of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, had entertained me several times about Marinetti, because his *Roi Bombance* had been presented at that very theater. But of Futurism as a collective movement I knew nothing. Boccioni in his letter wrote about it with much enthusiasm, then told me of his project, to create in Italy an analogous movement for painting. Indeed, at that time a first manifesto had already been issued, signed by Boccioni and by other Italian artists I did not know. He wrote me several letters to keep me up to date, and because I had spoken of the matter with various Italian friends (Cominetti, Bucci, etc.) he gave me the delicate task of selecting those who, to my mind, could join the group. He put it to me this way: 'Dear Gino, I am writing to ask you secretly (!) your judgment of who can sign our manifesto. . . . We have full confidence in your judgment. But I must warn you that the signers must be



F. T. Marinetti, Carlo Carrà, Umberto Boccioni, and Luigi Russolo, ca. 1912–13. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan



Gino Severini, Paris, ca. 1910–11. Photo: Paolo Pellegrin. Courtesy Severini archive, Rome

young men absolutely convinced of what the manifesto asserts. Adherence must be complete and without mental reservations. What we need is those intellectuals who would make up the complete Futurist to join themselves together around an absolute faith in *congenital complementarism*. Wanted are young men (and there are few of them) with faith and a secure selfless devotion; men of culture and action and who in their works, uncertain as those may be, may aspire to that fullness of perfection that marks the luminous path of the ideal.'"

Severini put his name to the *Manifesto of Futurist Painting* which is dated February 11, 1910. His and Balla's signatures replaced those of Bonzagni and Romani who had deserted the group. The manifesto proclaimed itself a violent denunciation of all the outworn rubbish that had become nested in Italian art. Boccioni so identified himself with the shared faith in "rebellion" that he enthusiastically took on the part of chief agitator for the movement.

The initial manifesto was followed by a second, dated April 11, 1910, which specified the motives behind the rebellion and laid down a more precise programmatic line: "Gesture, for us, will no longer be *a single moment* within the universal dynamism brought to a sudden stop: It will be, outrightly, *dynamic sensation* given permanent form. Everything is in movement, everything rushes forward, everything is in constant swift change. A figure is never stable in front of us but is incessantly appearing and disappearing. Because images persist on the retina, things in movement multiply, change form, follow one another like vibrations within the space they traverse. Thus a horse in swift course does not have four legs: It has twenty, and their movements are triangular."

Another passage—which Boccioni asserted he had written—is fundamental to an understanding of the style and pictorial ideas of the Futurists: "The sixteen people you have around you in a tram in rapid motion are one, ten, four, three; they stand in place and at the same time are in movement; they go and come, are projected out into the street and swallowed up by a patch of sunlight, then suddenly are back in their seats: perduring symbols of the universal vibration. And at times it happens that, on the cheek of the person we are speaking with in the street, we see a horse that passes by a good way off. Our bodies enter into the very sofas we sit on and the sofas themselves enter into us, in the same way as the passing tram enters into the houses which, in their turn, hurl themselves on the tram and become one with it. The way pictures are constructed is stupidly traditional. Painters have always shown us things and persons as if set directly in front of us. We however will put the *viewer* himself in the center of the picture."

The violence of these literary images and the precision of intent found no direct application in the language of painting: Boccioni himself was still caught up in the investigations on which he had been working for years. It was only in the summer of 1910 that he began to paint *The City Rises* (no. 50), the first canvas in which he would succeed in working out and applying his ideas on movement, light, and color. In the spring of that year, however, he had exhibited a number of pastels and drawings in the annual Famiglia Artistica show. Another participant was Luigi Russolo (1885–1947) who later wrote: "I met Boccioni one evening in Milan, at the Famiglia Artistica. It was in 1909. He was wearing a Russian fur hat, knee-high boots, a short topcoat with a broad fur collar. He could have been taken for a Russian. He had in fact only recently arrived from Russia and had traveled over much of it, venturing as far as the steppe of the Kirghizes! His clothing attracted attention, his eyes and expression attracted sympathy. We introduced ourselves. We found that our ideas were much alike, our artistic ideals very close; an equal hatred for things already done,

warmed up again, for the commonplaces of art, brought us immediately into close contact. We became friends, truly friends. One evening in front of a large poster announcing a Futurist manifestation we both commented with admiration on the courageous work Marinetti was carrying out for literature, and Boccioni said: 'We need something like that for painting.'

"A few days later, having met Marinetti in person, I expressed to him exactly the desire that some action like the one he was carrying out for literature and poetry should also be undertaken for painting. Marinetti, with the lively enthusiasm that characterized him, not only approved the idea but invited us to write down our ideas about painting as quickly as possible, pledging himself to publish them and launch them! So was born the manifesto of Futurist painters and the joining of the painters—Boccioni, Balla, Carrà, Russolo, and Severini—to the Futurist movement, which until then had been only literary."

In July 1910 Boccioni exhibited forty-two works in the summer show at Ca' Pesaro in Venice, including the *Stage Directress, Morning* (no. 36), *Twilight* (no. 37), *Gisella* (no. 15), *The Old Woman* (no. 7), and the self-portrait with a fur hat (no. 20). Marinetti later wrote: "With the venturesome and restless spirit of a fighter he wandered over the world trying out innumerable paths, was active in anarchist and revolutionary circles, was attracted in turn by violent action and the dream, before making up his mind to devote himself to painting. . . . In all his exhibited works Boccioni, marvelously endowed with what the Futurists would later call congenital complementarism, went on developing his diligent and victorious choices of a maximum of light and a maximum of pictorial dynamism." The Futurists had affirmed in their first manifesto that motion and light destroy the material solidity of bodies, and Boccioni tried to apply that programmatic declaration in his works.

In the months following the Venice exhibition he worked frantically toward a new definition of space in painting, in which the perspective was based on chromatic juxtapositions and on deformation of bodies in movement. Space explodes and fragments in a kaleidoscopic vision; color takes on new values, becoming more somber, harsh, and pure, a formal motif in itself.

Dynamic form and spatiality were amalgamated in a synthesis with color, analyzed and studied in new combinations of complementaries, tonal contrasts, and expressionistic deformations.

At the Permanente in Milan from July 24 to August 12 Boccioni exhibited a portrait and the much praised lyrically luminous *Three Women* (no. 41) of 1909–1910. But by that December the paintings he sent to the Famiglia Artistica exhibition in Milan—among them *Baruffa* and *Mourning*—showed that his art had undergone an extraordinary evolution. In March 1911 in an interview in the newspaper *Il Panaro* the artist said: "I move always ahead; I go forward always in continual struggle with myself to liberate myself from objective fact and arrive at an entirely spiritual expression: In me is the ultimate aspiration to try to reproduce the object as a sensation." The interviewer noted: "The art of Umberto Boccioni has never truly and properly succeeded—in the usual ways—but for him true success consists of the lively discussions his pictures have aroused and the polemics that go on around his name and his work."

Boccioni painted movement as a powerful vortex—the frenzied churning of modern urban life—in *The City Rises*; he expanded himself with the irrepressible hilarity of the harlot in *The Laugh* (no. 53), the entangled scintillation and chaos in *Riot in the Galleria* (no. 49).

These and other pictures were shown in Milan in the first "collective manifestation of Futurist art," a section of the Mostra d'Arte Libera, which opened in April 1911 and in which Russolo and Carrà also took part. The promoters' statement of purpose—Boccioni was among the signers—proclaimed that an exhibition has "the duty to welcome all the artist's personal expressions, from the most humble and infantile dream of a child to the most complex manifestations of a genius's maturity." Among the four hundred works on display, those of the Futurists caused the greatest sensation. Nino Barbantini, then director of the Museo d'Arte Moderna in Ca' Pesaro in Venice, wrote that while the exhibition was "useless and meaningless, worthy of note are the works by Umberto Boccioni and Carlo Dalmazzo Carrà." It was Barbantini, the critic who had invited Boccioni to show in Venice nine months earlier, who now perceived in the artist's work a new maturity and development: "In his restless aspiration to test new and daring spaces, to represent original visions in unusual forms evading conventions, he brings a youthfulness and exuberance that cannot fail to arouse warm sympathy in all who consider him openly, without prejudices. Since last year he has made appreciable progress because, if he has lost in equilibrium and measure, he has gained in boldness and fervor, so much so that his works of a year ago seem almost awkward, timid, and even academic beside the more recent ones; but if in his extreme tendencies he resembles an unbridled Frenchman, he is always sustained by a seriousness in exploration and a solidity of preparation that reveal in him an Italian temperament." During this Milanese exhibition *The Laugh* was damaged by a viewer who was unconvinced by the new forms of this "free art."

By the end of June the important Florentine review *La Voce* published a savage denunciation of the Milan exhibition, signed by Ardengo Soffici. Soffici had stopped in Milan on his return from Paris, a city he often visited, where he had come to know the Cubists. He was curious about the new art which, according to its programmatic declarations, seemed determined to liberate itself from the provincialism that stifled Italian art. The paintings on view, Soffici wrote, "in no way represent a highly personal vision of art, as some intrepid newspaper scribblers may believe. No. They are on the contrary stupid and repugnant blusterings by unscrupulous persons who, taking a gloomy view of the world, with no poetic feeling, through the eyes of some thick-skinned American pig farmer, want us to believe they see it flowering and flaming; and they think that by slapping colors madly onto a picture worthy of academic janitors, or by dragging back into the limelight the nasty strings of Divisionism—that moribund error *alla* Segantini—they can put their game across in the eyes of the foolish mob."

Stung by this violent attack, the Futurists decided to go to Florence to organize a punitive expedition against Soffici. They had already participated in various public demonstrations which ended in uproar—in May Boccioni had declared to a conference that soon the traditional picture would have no point or purpose, that colored gases would replace traditional colors and the hues would be perceived as sentiments. Carrà later described the Florentine episode: "We were guided by Palazzeschi to the Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse where we knew we would find the *Voce* crowd. Indeed, right away Soffici was pointed out to us, and Boccioni addressed him abruptly: 'Are you Ardengo Soffici?' A hearty slap followed the affirmative reply, Soffici reacting energetically with right and left blows of his cane. In no time the pandemonium became hellish: Little tables loaded with glasses and coffee cups were overturned, bystanders fled screaming, waiters came running to restore order." The

brawl finally calmed down, and, after the two groups set forth their respective ideas, the Florentines, led by Soffici, joined the Futurists.

It was now decided to make Futurism known outside Italy, and Marinetti made contacts with the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. An exhibition scheduled for the end of 1911 had to be postponed because Marinetti was in Libya as a war correspondent. Carrà and Boccioni went to Paris on their own to investigate the atmosphere and the state of the art. Their guide in Paris was Severini: "It is impossible to imagine their joy, their surprise and amazement at discovering a world of art of which they hadn't the remotest idea. I took them to my neighbors', then to Picasso's, and then everywhere modern painting and painters were to be seen. The life of Paris itself made them ecstatic. They were very unhappy at having to leave, but they departed brought up-to-date, rich with priceless notions and visions, and their thanks to me were not sparing. The visit to Paris made an enormous impression on Boccioni, perhaps even greater than on Carrà and Russolo. I must say that thanks to my hospitality, he was able to remain eight or ten days after the others left and became better acquainted with the artistic circles I frequented."

During that visit Boccioni met Guillaume Apollinaire and told him he had painted two pictures expressing and representing states of mind, the essence of a feeling transcribed into image. In an article in the *Mercure de France* Apollinaire alluded to the episode that had taken place in Florence between the Futurists and the *Voce* writers, and the hard-hitting tactics they had used "*pour forcer l'admiration*," to ensure their admiration; ironically he added: "In May 1912 the Futurists will exhibit in Paris. No doubt, if they want to resort to the same arguments, they will have their hands full at that time."

Boccioni's Paris visit permitted him to judge at first hand the Cubist aesthetic of Picasso and Braque, of whom he knew something from the news in Severini's letters and from Soffici's article on them in *La Voce* in August. The difference between the Cubist and Futurist approaches would be a major topic in the preface to the Italian group's catalogue for their Paris exhibition.

While the Cubists' method of disintegrating the image doubtless impressed Boccioni, this type of analysis would not find an application in his own painting. In Cubism the formal element and the will to reconstruct the image is preponderant over the other aspects of representation; for Boccioni, vision was based above all on the complementary quality of colors and on the relationship of the objects with their surroundings. The preface to the exhibition catalogue, signed by the "Futurist quintet" but largely written by Boccioni, contained an attack on the Cubists and their undynamic vision of reality: "They obstinately continue to paint objects motionless, frozen, and all the static aspects of Nature. . . . To paint from the posing model is an absurdity, and an act of mental cowardice, even if the model be translated upon the picture in linear, spherical or cubic forms. To lend an allegorical significance to an ordinary nude figure, deriving the meaning of the picture from the objects held by the model or from those which are arranged about him, is to our mind the evidence of a traditional and academic mentality."

In the same preface the new Futurist aesthetic was revealed: "In order to make the spectator live in the centre of the picture, as we express it in our manifesto, the picture must be a synthesis of WHAT ONE REMEMBERS and of WHAT ONE SEES."

In the pictures Boccioni exhibited in Paris—the three *States of Mind* (no. 56), *The Laugh, Modern Idol* (no. 55), *Simultaneous Visions* (no. 57), *The Street Enters into the House,*

The Strengths of a Street (no. 58), *The Roundup*—he succeeded in transposing his theoretical discussions from the linguistic plane to the plane of imagery. Fractured, shattered, and refracted, the representation took the form of a luminous vortex. The planes intersected according to the contrasts of forces internal to the image itself: "If we paint the phases of a riot, the crowd bristling with fists and the noisy attacks of the mounted police are translated onto the canvas in bundles of lines that correspond to all the forces in conflict according to the laws of the overall violence of the picture. These force-lines must envelop and sweep along the viewer who will be in some way obliged to struggle himself with the personages in the picture. All the objects, in accord with physical transcendentalism, tend toward the infinite by way of their force-lines, whose continuity is gauged by our intuition. It is we who must draw these force-lines if we are to bring back the work of art to true painting. We interpret nature by giving these lines on the canvas as the beginnings or prolongations of the rhythms that the objects imprint on our sensibility."

The Paris exhibition was received coldly by the critics. Apollinaire reviewed it in *L'Intransigeant* on February 7 and singled out Boccioni's superiority over the other Futurists. But at the same time he emphasized the dependence of this pictorial form on that of the French: "Picasso's influence is thus undeniable, as it is on all contemporary painting. Boccioni's best canvas is the one most directly inspired by Picasso's latest works. It does not even lack those numerals in printing type which bring in such a simple and grandiose reality. . . . The young Futurist painters can hold their own with some of our avant-garde artists, but so far they are only feeble pupils of a Picasso or a Derain and as for charm, they have no idea what that is."

Marinetti wished to spread Futurism on an international level, and the exhibition, thanks to his skill as an organizer, moved from Paris to the Sackville Gallery in London in March 1912. There the composer-pianist Ferruccio Busoni purchased Boccioni's *The City Rises*. The following month the exhibition opened in Berlin, in Herwarth Walden's renowned Galerie Der Sturm. Boccioni wrote from Berlin to his fellow Futurists at home: "Dear Carrà, The exhibition opened this morning with the city all white with snow. The visitors were very few compared with what I saw in Paris and London. The cause of it all: the bad weather, the people unenthusiastic over artistic events, and, I fear, the organizer being a journalist and therefore the friend or enemy of the whole lot of journalists, and so of the only means of publicity in cases like ours."

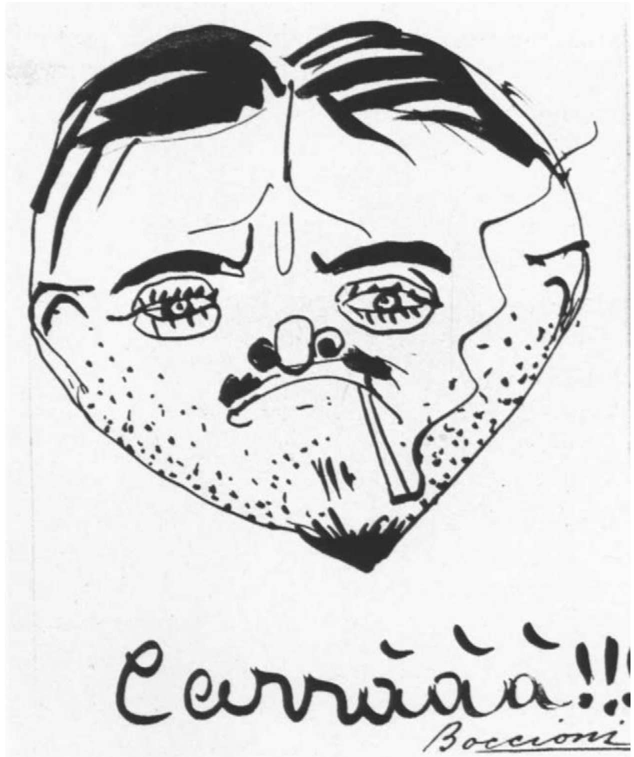
Boccioni continued: "While these days my entire being feels the need and urgency of construction, I am prepared to sacrifice anything if I can deepen in myself the new conception of things which is brought out, incidentally or deliberately, in many works of the younger avant-garde and which we have not intuited in the dark depths of Milan. Marinetti says I am inclined to exaggerate the worth of others. But I cannot deny myself the pleasure of considering the work of certain young Frenchmen as excellent and of declaring to myself that Picasso is an extraordinary talent, but that they lack everything I myself see and feel, and because of that I believe and hope I will soon surpass them."

A large number of works were sold in Berlin, and in May the exhibition was moved to Brussels. A series of traveling shows organized by Walden took off from Berlin and were seen from July to October in Hamburg, The Hague, Amsterdam, Munich, Budapest, and Prague.

Meanwhile Boccioni was both deepening and broadening his conception of dyna-



Louis Marcoussis, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 1912–20. The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Umberto Boccioni, caricature of Carlo Carrà, 1910. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan

mism. Around 1912 he tried his hand for the first time at working in three dimensions. On March 15, 1912, he wrote to his friend Vico Baer: "These days I am obsessed by sculpture! I believe I have glimpsed a complete renovation of that mummified art." Less than a month later, on April 11, the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture* appeared, signed "Umberto Boccioni, painter and sculptor." In it he aimed his blows at traditional sculpture, above all for its inability to create new forms and free itself from the "traditional concept of sculptural form."

"As point of departure," he went on, "we must proceed from the central nucleus of the object we wish to create, and from that basis discover the new laws—that is, the new forms—that link it invisibly but mathematically to the *visible plastic infinite* and to the *inner plastic infinite*. That new plastic art will therefore involve translating the atmospheric planes that link and intersect things into plaster, bronze, glass, wood, and any other material one may wish." He gave a rallying cry, proclaiming "the *absolute and total abolition of the finite and of the statue complete in itself.* Let us fling open the figure and let it incorporate within itself whatever may surround it." The artist went on to develop his theories, steadily realizing the ideas set forth in his manifesto. A group of sculptures was created—*Head + House + Light, Head + Window, Antigrazioso, Empty and Full Abstracts of a Head*—at the same time as he completed a new series of paintings notably influenced by Cubism; he would show the sculptures at the Galerie La Boëtie in Paris from June 20 to July 16, 1913.

In January 1913 the first number of a new fortnightly review, *Lacerba*, came out; it was founded by the writers Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici and printed in Florence. *Lacerba* would contain the most ferocious polemics between the Futurists and the former writers for *La Voce*. Soon afterward in Rome, on February 11, the "First Exhibition of Futurist Painting" opened in the foyer of the Teatro Costanzi in Rome. Boccioni exhibited new paintings —*Matter* (no. 60), *Elasticity* (no. 69), *Decomposition of a Figure at a Table, Horizontal Volumes* (no. 59), *Antigrazioso* (no. 66), and *Abstract Dimensions* (no. 67)—that exemplified his studies of the intersection of planes, of force-lines, and on decomposition of the object, principles he was applying at the same time to sculpture.

The Rome exhibition became the scene of one of those stormy *serate Futuriste* (Futurist evenings). The newspaper *La Sera* reported on March 1: "The painter Boccioni was expected to illustrate and comment on the exhibition of pictures that expound the theories of the new school; however, the continual heckling of the audience and the infernal noise of a few groups of merry interrupters almost totally prevented the young and bold-spirited orator from being heard. He avenged himself by insulting quite efficaciously the intolerable nonlisteners and promising punches and slaps to the lot of them."

And in *Lacerba* on March 15, Giovanni Papini published a declaration "*Contro il Futurismo*," in which the Florentine writer, though not joining the new movement, took a position favorable to it: "I am not, as I said at the start, a Futurist. But I maintain . . . that before condemning these young men once and for all, before burying them under ridicule and a rain of ripe tomatoes, it should be the duty of every man of integrity to evaluate the reasons for and against. It would be only honest to read their theses, to try to understand their pictures, to examine their ideas, and to see if in this case prejudices and antipathies should be overcome and their worth and good intentions recognized."

In the same issue was an article by Boccioni, "The Plastic Foundation of Futurist Sculpture and Painting," in which he distanced himself from Cubism: "The refuting a priori of a reality: Therein lies the abyss that separates us from Cubism, that puts us Futurists at the farthest point in world painting."

The opposition between Futurism and Cubism exploded after Apollinaire's article on the subject in the Parisian review *Montjoie!* of March 18, 1913. Boccioni replied in *Lacerba* on April 1 with an essay eloquently titled "The Futurists Plagiarized in France," insisting on the newness of the Futurist aesthetic, which sought to represent an object that prolongs itself in its environment, that is, to represent movement. Let the scoffers, he wrote, "remember that expansion of bodies in space as a stylization of Impressionism, that simultaneity and consequent compenetration of planes, that dynamism in painting and sculpture, that force-lines and the devout exhilaration over the new certainties of modernity—new, profound, unshakable—these are *our* ideas, created by ourselves, springing from our pure and inexhaustible Italian genius. They are ideas we give with great love to everyone and above all to the rising young Italian painters. They are ideas which, while being plagiarized or absorbed for use abroad, are scoffed at in Italy with a superficiality unworthy of a great people such as the Italian people are becoming."

Later in 1913 an exhibition of Boccioni's sculpture opened at the Galerie La Boëtie in Paris. In his preface to the exhibition catalogue the artist went deeper into the theories already set forth in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture*. In particular he explained the significance of *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (no. 88), one of his most important



Umberto Boccioni, *A Futurist Evening in Milan* (*Una serata futurista a Milano*), 1911. On the stage are Boccioni, Balilla Pratella, F. T. Marinetti, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan

works: "To render a body in motion, I definitely do not present the trajectory, that is, the passage from one state of repose to another state of repose, but force myself to ascertain the form that expresses continuity in space." In reviewing the show, Apollinaire noted that many of the Italian artist's experiments had already been attempted by Picasso and the sculptor Agéro. But he did admit that there were innovations in the variety of materials and in the representation of the simultaneity and violence of movement. He added, however, a postscript: "Latest news. Rumor has it that Boccioni's 'Muscles in velocity' have run off with the bit between their teeth. One can't yet catch up with them."

In September the Futurists returned to Berlin to show as a group with the leading avant-garde painters of Europe in the Herbstsalon, a major event organized by Walden and his Galerie Der Sturm. Meanwhile on the home front the battle continued. In August, Carrà wrote his own manifesto, *The Painting of Sounds, Noises, Odors*. Boccioni published a series of articles in *Lacerba* including "Futurist Dynamism and French Painting" (August 1), "Italian Ignorance" (August 15), and "Against the Italian Artistic Cowardice" (September 1). These were attacks on Italian indifference to the new Futurist aesthetic, together with a violent appeal for an all-out campaign against the provincialism pervading all forms of art in Italy. His position would become more overtly political after the Futurist political manifesto was printed in *Lacerba* (October 15). Signed by Marinetti, Boccioni, Carrà, and Russolo, it trumpeted their total opposition to the current political program along with an extreme—even extremist—exaltation of Italian nationalism.

Papini, the perpetual fellow-traveler rather than partisan, wrote in a rider to the manifesto that he was "with" the Futurists but a bit skeptical about the originality of their political proposals; he and Marinetti were becoming increasingly opposed, finally creating a battle of words between Futurists and "Lacerbians" in the pages of that review. Despite the

controversy *Lacerba* organized an exhibition at the Galleria Gonnelli in Florence where Boccioni showed new paintings incorporating his recent studies of dynamism.

The concept of dynamism, as expressed by Boccioni, was different from that of the other Futurists, notably from that of his onetime teacher Balla. While Balla was representing successive instants of action in space and time, playing on the rhythms set up by moving objects, Boccioni sought a synthetic form, a single image which could express the fusion of the object and its surrounding environment. He came to think that dynamism could make simultaneously perceptible, and, through a strong process of abstraction, could represent the sensation of speed, not merely the evolution of states of motion.

At this time Boccioni published his first *parole in libertà*, "words-in-freedom" or, better, "words set free" that Marinetti had invented. *Scarpetta da società + orina* (more or less, "dancing shoe + urine") was written as commentary to Marinetti's article on the death of free verse and on the typographic revolution that permitted words to be infused with the new dimension of velocity. Another such effort, *Uomo + vallata + montagna* ("man + valley + mountain"), appeared in *Lacerba* on February 1, 1914. In the next number of that review Papini's article *Il cerchio si chiude* ("The circle closes") deepened his adversarial position toward the Futurists and, in particular, toward Boccioni's recent activity: "It happens that, out of love for that art which is our only love, one may fall away from art and return to the utter disgrace of verisimilitude—to working from life and at first hand. It happens too that out of lusting for anything new at whatever cost, one may end up with something so old as to be older than art itself—that is, with nature in its natural state."

Papini's virulent attack against Boccioni's "overly realistic" art was answered by the artist in the article *Il cerchio non si chiude* ("The circle does not close") in *Lacerba* on March 1: "The new conditions of the life we live in have created an infinity of natural elements that are completely new, and therefore have never entered the domain of art; for these the Futurists are resolved to discover new means of expression—*at any cost*! Thus, in the Futurist system, there is a process of destruction of the old means of expression that is parallel to a process of research to discover new ones. Now, dear Papini (it is painful to have to address these words to you, when we are fighting against everyone), when in painting, sculpture, words-in-freedom, and the art of noises you find the things themselves 'substituted for the lyrical or rational transformation of things' this does not mean that the circle is closing on itself. . . . It is at just that point that the circle of creative possibilities opens widest. It is the moment when the artist, to escape the imitative procedure that makes him fall inevitably into the most tired resemblances, puts himself in the place of reality. But no sooner does that reality enter to become part of the worked material of the piece than the lyrical purpose to which it is called, its position, its dimensions, the contrasts it creates, all transform its objective anonymity and set it on the path toward becoming one of the worked elements." Indeed, he adds, to find new emotive elements it is necessary to return to reality, and as support for his thesis he adduces various examples of Futurist experimentation: plastic dyamism, words-in-freedom, "noise-music."

This exchange closed with Papini's reply, *Cerchi aperti* ("Open circles"), in *Lacerba* on March 15. He called for an explanation of the "realistic use of fragments of reality in painting and sculpture" and pointed out that "you [Boccioni] should have explained to me why you did this and why you no longer do so (at least in painting), and demonstrated to me in what way those elements are not the naive expressions of crude and gross verism but enter into the work of art as new materials of expression."

Some chapters of Boccioni's new book *Pittura, scultura futuriste* ("Futurist painting and sculpture") were published in the same issue of *Lacerba* together with news of his recent and current exhibitions, notably the show of his sculpture in Sprovieri's Galleria Futurista in Rome which had opened in December 1913 and which would move to the Galleria Gonnelli in Florence in March 1914.

Boccioni's book, on which he had worked for an entire year, finally came out at the end of February 1914, dedicated "to the genius and muscles of my brothers Marinetti Carrà Russolo who with me sacrificed everything for the great Futurist action, battling by day against the furious circle of hatreds and passéist slanders and creating during the electric nights of Milan and Paris the great antitraditional and dynamic avant-garde atmosphere which must renovate Italy and the world by goading their spiritual velocity." In seventeen chapters all the ideas of Futurist aesthetics are expounded in mature and definitive form. The first five discuss the modifications of Futurist ideology and its relation to reality. The chapter titled "Why We Are Not Impressionists" traces the reasons behind the birth of an avant-garde art; the remaining chapters deal with Futurist language and synthesis: "Absolute Motion and Relative Motion," "Dynamism," "Force-Lines," "Solidification of Impressionism," "The Compenetration of Planes," "Dynamic Complementarism," "We Shall Place the Viewer in the Center of the Picture," "Simultaneity," and "Physical Transcendentalism and Plastic States of Mind."

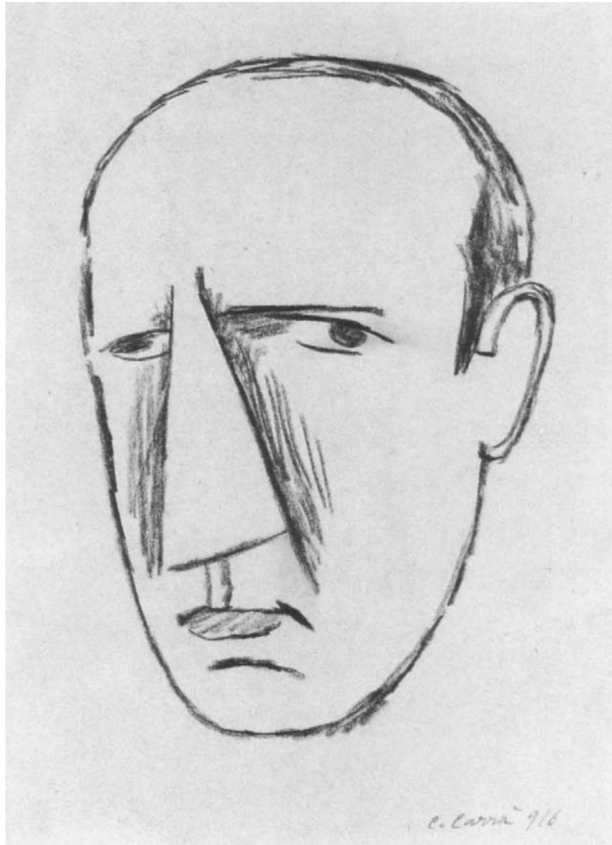
The reactions to the book's publication were decidedly mixed even within the Futurist ranks; Carrà in particular resented certain of Boccioni's references to himself. In his autobiography Severini recalled the book's reception: "Boccioni's book, *Pittura, scultura futuriste*, had come out. This is not the place to criticize this book whose value is more polemical than critical. As regards theoretical explanation, it contains all the thinking of the moment, in which however that of the other Futurists is reflected. It cannot be denied that the Futurist theoretician who seeks to condense all of our intentions into definitions and sometimes axioms is Boccioni. One needs to take into account many things that were, so to speak, only indistinctly intuited in Milan, an environment still amorphous as regards art. As we have seen, Boccioni's contacts with a better informed and more developed artistic world were only too rare. On the other hand the book suffers from an insufficient cultural history. . . . When, by force of intuition, he arrives at a fundamental truth such as that of 'physical transcendentalism,' it is a truism everyone knows. Yet there are many points of view I would call luminous, prismatic, which show what a fine document of the period it is, even if its greatest value is, as I have said, polemical."

Severini reports Carrà's reaction: "It was in Paris that he received Boccioni's book, but from what I gathered from his letter it did not exactly please him; in the first place, according to him, at a certain point in the book Boccioni describes him as derivative of himself, at least theoretically speaking; and in the second place he considers it puerile, as Boccioni wrote, 'to base Futurist painting on his three little *States of Mind* pictures.'"

And with the detachment of one recalling a happening long past, Severini remarked: "Today, after so much time has gone by, all those rivalries, those megalomanias growing in the shade of Marinetti's megalomania, make one smile a little, the more so because the ideas expressed in the manifestos and in Boccioni's book, however interesting their attitudes may still be, are no longer considered anything but summaries of a theory or points of departure for an aesthetic, and not as true and proper bases for an aesthetic. Yet later, as various ideas of 'avant-gardism' developed, they became again a valid stimulus and fount of creation."



Umberto Boccioni, ca. 1913–14.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua



Carlo Carrà, *Umberto Boccioni*, 1916. Charcoal on paper, 9¼ × 6¾ in. (23.5 × 17.2 cm.). Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Slifka, New York

In the first half of 1914 Boccioni took part in exhibitions organized by Sprovieri in the Galleria Futurista in Rome (February–March 1914) and Naples (May–June 1914). Compared with his preceding paintings, the works produced at this time shine with an unusual liveliness and brilliant color, a denser and more full-bodied use of paint, and an ever deeper investigation of spatial solutions. Space in these works no longer has a dimension that follows specific laws of perspective; it responds instead to the laws of the object that is represented and of its relationship with surrounding reality. Absolute motion and relative motion are dynamic qualities intrinsic to the object. As Boccioni wrote, "The plastic potentiality of the object is its force, that is, its primordial psychology. This force, this primordial psychology, permits us to create in the picture a new subject that does not aim for a narrative

reproduction of an episode but is instead the coordination of the plastic values of reality, a coordination purely architectonic and free from literary or sentimental influences. In that prime state of motion, which I explain as something separate though in reality it is not, the object is not seen in its relative motion but is conceived in its vital lines which reveal how it would decompose according to the tendencies of its forces. Thus we arrive at a decomposition of the object which is no longer in the Cubist formula but is rather the very look of the object, its interpretation by way of an infinitely refined sensation superior to that of old art."

Elsewhere in his book Boccioni clarifies his concept of velocity: "A horse in movement is not a stationary horse that moves but a horse in movement, which is something else, which must be conceived and expressed as something completely different. It means that objects in movement must be conceived otherwise than in the movement they have within themselves. This means finding a form that will be the expression of this new absolute: Speed, which is a truth no genuinely modern temperament can ignore. It means the study of the aspects life has assumed in velocity and in the consequent simultaneity."

In the works of this period Boccioni arrived at an unprecedented abstraction, which did not exclude the recognizability of the subject in its lines of dynamic tension, because, in his words, "Dynamic form is a kind of fourth dimension in painting and sculpture that does not take on real life without the full affirmation of the three dimensions that determine the volume: height, width, depth." This group of pictures already shows evidence of a return to Cubist formal analysis which, by the end of 1914, would lead Boccioni to paint according to the principles laid down by Cézanne.

In the spring of 1914 Boccioni went to Paris for a few days. He was passing through a period of grave crisis that would persist for a number of months. On July 19 he wrote to Emilio Cecchi, a literary figure of some importance: "I feel myself overmuch alone . . . and incredulity and diffidence leave me perplexed. There are moments when I don't understand the reason for the battle and ask myself a thousand things I would say aloud with great joy . . . but in a letter they irritate me. The long hours at the writing table working on the book have left me almost nauseated with theoretical exposition."

The First World War began in early August. In September Boccioni took part in demonstrations against Austria and in favor of Italian intervention in the war. He was arrested along with Marinetti, a not unexpected turn of events as a letter of September 16 to his family makes clear: "You have surely read that, from a box in the [Teatro] Dal Verme during a gala performance yesterday evening, I ripped up an Austrian flag and Marinetti waved the Italian. Tonight we will begin again. Perhaps they will arrest us for a few hours. It is necessary." And then, referring to his mood, he added: "It's the usual thing. I am not working. I am going through a period of great calm."

By the start of 1915, however, Boccioni was back at work. At the end of March he wrote to Cecchi: "I am working fairly well, and you? I am in any case very happy and full of material for construction. Let us hope. Construction . . . that is the word that terrorizes those poor powerless sansculottes."

In July he enlisted in the Volunteer Cyclists' Battalion. There is a chronicle of this period in the pages his fellow volunteer Marinetti wrote a few months later for *La Gazzetta dello Sport*: "Milan adores her sons, and in truth the Lombard Volunteer Cyclists' Battalion contained the best of her sons, of every age from seventeen to fifty, the very ones who,



Boccioni with his sister, Amelia, 1916.
Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan



F. T. Marinetti, Boccioni, and Mario Sironi in 1915 during their service as members of the Volunteer Cyclists' Battalion.
Photo: Marinetti Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven



Boccioni, 1916, shortly before his death.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua

coming from . . . the most diverse groups—students, monarchists, revolutionary workers, lawyers and clerks, poor men and millionaires, traditional painters and poets, avant-gardists, semi-Futurists, and Futurists—had already met each other in Piazza del Duomo and in the Galleria almost every evening, during the winter and spring, to exchange punches and put the neutralists to flight."

At the start of the Great War Italy was neutral. The majority of the population favored maintaining a nonbelligerent status. The neutralist ranks were made up mostly of Catholics, socialists, and liberals who followed the policy of the prime minister, Giolitti. Those declaring themselves in favor of entering the war were the conservatives and the nationalists, the latter with hopes that intervention might put Italy in a position of greater economic and political expansion. The Italian government, after long diplomatic negotiations with the countries of the Entente (Britain, France, and Russia), declared war against the Axis powers in May 1915.

Boccioni's expressive energies found an outlet in the direct experience of combat at the front. The war diary he kept between August and December of 1915 records in telegraphic language his impressions of life in the trenches: "Hunger fatigue nervousness"; "Reveille, cold! cold! cold? Some of us exhausted or near so. Sironi doing very badly. A corporal has to go down [from their mountain position] sick. A lieutenant in the Alpines [a regiment] arrives with letters. Having won a trench they ask what we are doing. Monticelli replies that attack for our side means a massacre. . . . Another Alpine arrives, then another. Very handsome beasts. We are heroic; we lead the same life without the shadow of equipment and training and without having the right physique. In short the life we are leading is moved by a continual effort of will." Later: "Now the lieutenant comes and tells me to stay behind because my cough is dangerous for everybody at night in a surprise action like that being planned. . . . I protest with energy I would rather quit the corps than stay behind, 'I'll cough with my head in a blanket but I want to be in the front line!' "

The Cyclists' Battalion was dissolved in December 1915. Among its volunteers had been Marinetti, Sironi, Funi, Erba, Piatti, Sant'Elia, Russolo; Boccioni returned to Milan. In June 1916 he was the guest of the marchese and marchesa di Casanova in their villa at Pallanza on Lago Maggiore where he began to paint again: "I am working a lot and in various ways. . . . It is terrible, the burden of having to work out for oneself a century of painting." He abandoned his strident and highly charged palette and turned to a new imagery related to the French Post-Impressionist tradition. He passed through another time of crisis, in confronting his earlier experiments, and deepened his formal interests, finding inspiration in Cézanne's volumetric analyses. In that brief period of the artist's work a new approach to space and image became evident, with a return to a more analytical phase in studying the figure and color. In the few works painted in Pallanza his old love for luministic effects mingles with a renewed awareness of structure and space, and the portrait of Ferruccio Busoni (no. 85) shows the new Boccionian expressiveness.

In July 1916 Boccioni was declared fit to join the regular army and assigned to the field artillery. At the end of the month he left for Sorte, near Verona: "You can't imagine what it means to *re-become* a soldier at thirty-four and in my condition and with what life was about to give me. Courage, but it's terrible," he wrote on July 29 to Vico Baer, the friend who had always helped him in moments of need. On August 17 Boccioni died following a fall from a horse. On the occasion of the posthumous exhibition held from

December 1916 to January 1917, which Boccioni had asked Marinetti to organize in the event of his death to help his aged and ill mother, his battle companion Carrà wrote a moving testimony to his dead friend: "I see him there, in the July atmosphere of the road, at the edge of an islet of electric light, amid broad shadows stretching around him in the torrid immensity of the night. His words were of the first hours of our fraternal friendship when at evening, work done, in a perfect spiritual communion our spirits mingled in the same felicity. . . . We felt we had tormented ourselves overmuch, and we would have liked to give vent to all the tenderness that filled us with agitated emotion on that eve of departure for Verona, for war and death. I should have liked to clasp him to my breast, and for him to take with him that act of my brotherly feeling, but I lacked courage to do so, and at the dawning of the day (oh how many dawns had found us together conversing about art) we exchanged a firm handshake, and I could think of nothing except a salutation: *Addio, caro! Addio.* How could I have thought that those words were the terrible salute to the brother about to die? Forever moving forward, with an impetus forever new and always different, he was setting out to surpass even himself, and his last spiritual steps forward speak to us of the even greater ardor of the first struggles."

The Futurists and Their Contemporaries

The Futurists had been a long time formulating their theories and were determined to maintain their identity by standing firm in the storms of innovation that were sweeping over the art world. While all the Futurists agreed to this separation, it was upheld especially by those best informed about the international scene—Marinetti, Severini, and Boccioni.

Severini had moved to Paris in 1906, and he had become the link between the Futurists and the artistic and cultural world outside Italy. He moved in the circles that championed the most avant-garde tendencies and knew many literary figures. He would marry the daughter of Paul Fort, the *prince des poètes*, and Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Blaise Cendrars, Braque, Picasso, Raoul Dufy, and Suzanne Valadon were among his friends. In 1910 Severini accepted his friend Boccioni's invitation to sign the first *Manifesto of Futurist Painters* and thenceforth kept the band informed of the latest news in Paris through long letters which remain of great interest. In 1911, during their first official showing as a group (an exhibition held in Milan in the former premises of the Ricordi music publishers), they were vigorously attacked by Ardengo Soffici. the Florentine champion of Cubism who accused them of using worn-out forms and iconography made irrelevant by the Cubists. Soffici's articles in the review *La Voce* about Picasso, Braque, and the other Cubists stirred the newly formed group to confront the French challenge. For the Futurists the renewal of Italian culture was a matter of international as well as national import. To break through the limitations of a vocabulary still tied to a pronounced idealism, they needed to understand just what their artistic rivals were up to. The theoretical texts they wrote clearly distinguished their aesthetic from that of the Cubists, a definition that was as necessary for their development as for the public's.

The first significant contact with Cubist ideas came from a lengthy letter that Severini wrote to Boccioni in 1911. It read in part: "The most modern [painters] can be divided into Cubists, Picassoans, and Independents. I give the latter that name because I don't know what other to give a number of individuals who propose to turn out painted canvases following only their minds' impulses but with neither aim nor direction. They say they don't want to confuse their fellow creature by giving him the illusion of something true by means of paint. When they have produced a nude woman, for example, they say: 'This is canvas and these are the colors, but I did not set out to produce a laughing woman or, better, I made this woman as my brain wished it and not as my eyes and everyone else's have seen her in life.' In landscapes some of them attempt to present trees and houses from the greatest possible number of sides; indeed, their aim is to present objects from all sides, and in that

they are in direct contact with the Cubists but with the difference that the Cubists resolve the problem directly by showing half the object in perspective and the other half immediately alongside, sectioned like an engineer's blueprint, whereas these others compose bizarre perspectives that at the most give the impression of seeing the objects in a bird's-eye view from above. Those who strictly speaking are Cubists do not even know why they are called thus. Perhaps it is because of the geometric forms that predominate in their pictures. Their endeavor is certainly heroic but infantile. I allude to the goal they have set themselves to achieve: painting an object from several sides or dissected. The engineers have resolved that question in a more complete fashion, and there is no need to go back to it. Some Cubists become decorators and caricaturists, but then their sincerity is open to doubt."

Severini distinguishes between the Cubists and Picassoans by explaining, according to his own point of view, how much the process of abstraction practiced by Picasso and Braque differs from the self-styled Cubists' fanciful and even arbitrary tricks of perspective. (This distinction between Picassoans and Cubists, with the latter term reserved for painters like Metzinger, Gleizes, Le Fauconnier, and Lhote, reflects the general critical position of the time.) His observations sum up the polemics that raged around the Salon des Indépendants which opened at the end of April 1911. In Room 41, the focus of much heated debate, there were works by Le Fauconnier, Gleizes, Metzinger, and Delaunay, all of them artists strenuously defended by Apollinaire in the pages of *L'Intransigeant*. In an article published on April 21 the poet stressed the force of these works and the modernity of their style, though without denying that they looked very much stripped down to basics and sometimes overly rigid. All of these artists made an obvious effort to solve the problem of reducing and concentrating form, a problem Picasso and Braque had resolved with a considerably greater intensity of synthesis. But the latter pair demonstrated an aristocratic aloofness in their refusal to participate in the official exhibitions, and in any case during this period their efforts were increasingly concentrated on issues of spatiality and on the dialectic between image and reality.

Since 1910 Severini had been living at 5 Impasse Guelma in Montmartre, the same building in which Braque had his studio. There he observed his French colleague's development firsthand and discussed the problems that had concerned him for some time, notably the relation between form and movement that was the cornerstone of the Futurist aesthetic.

Severini wrote further: "If you say to them that a chair has no inherent movement, they reply that because man can impart one to it, they consider [the chair] as a thing endowed with movement. However, sometimes they fix on an object constituting part of the picture, for example, a dice cube or a drawer handle, and they put a good deal of emphasis on that detail. If you ask them why, they will tell you that a die does not have the same movement as a drinking glass or a bottle or a chair; and if you tell them that this affirmation is purely gratuitous and is a rather obvious contradiction, they reply: 'There are so many things like that that one can't explain!' And then they pretend they are not intuitive! Some of their theories come fairly close to our truths. For example: If you look at a man, you can see him circumscribed within a definite plastic form because now you have to see him in connection with all the movements he can make and in all the deformations resulting from the movements. Yet they do not accept that one can give the impression of movement by giving a man in motion more arms or more legs, because by that means one would arrive at most at an impressionistic physical truth to the detriment of the plastic and pictorial point

of departure which, for them, is the same as that adopted by the masters, from Rembrandt right up to Corot."

"In front of one of his pictures," Severini went on, "I made Braque confess that his art was in principle descriptive, and once I got this assertion out of him I pointed out that by the force of things it became anecdotal. And so very anecdotal that to depict a table you use the kind of walnut stain sold in corner paint shops and applied to ordinary soft wood to make it look like walnut. And the same for ebony and rosewood. In that way, he says, it works out to be much simpler and less arty."

The young Futurist was trying strenuously to grasp the basic principles of the Cubist method, but the significance of the structural intuition Braque and Picasso relied on eluded him, as did their fundamental credo that their images had nothing to do with empirical reality. He did, however, recognize the importance of their efforts to simplify forms and to render the image in simultaneous views. He saw too that, while the paintings of Braque and Picasso were strikingly similar in this period, each painter was in fact exploring entirely different aspects. Picasso aimed at his own kind of pictorial truth by confronting the problems of spatiality and looking deeply into the reality of the objects he represented. Braque was more concerned with the relation between things and colors, and he concentrated more on the problem of their relationship with the space around them (whence the charge of illusionism that Severini brought against his paintings).

Severini continued: "They make a show of a great distaste for the nobility of colored material and for painting in general. When I tried to remind Braque that the Greeks inserted hairs into a sculptured head to create a beard, he said that he himself was following this principle but that the Greeks had turned away from it because they aimed at an expression of beauty whereas he did not wish his painting to be beautiful. . . . This exaggerated repugnance of theirs for beauty has an explanation in something their friends told me: It seems they are convinced and fervent Christians. For that reason they make use of the humblest materials in order to enhance a kind of intimate modest beauty, something perhaps inherent in them [the materials]; this constitutes their ultimate goal in art, quite outside any contemporary metaphysical problem."

Severini's reference to the placement of a realistic element, convincingly naturalistic in appearance, into an obviously unrealistic context is of special interest, above all in light of the future development of both Cubism and Futurism and the revolutionary innovation of collage. Even more significantly it anticipates the introduction of real-life materials into sculpture which Boccioni himself would practice beginning in 1912.

Severini's long letter reveals the gulf that, from the outset, separated Futurist and Cubist aesthetics. On the one hand, Futurist painting: compounded out of light and color, based on the dynamic decomposition of forms—forms broken down not for analysis of their structure and components but in consequence of their motion in space and the associated emotion—and accentuated by a fierce and pure-toned coloring. On the other, Cubist painting: exploration of tonal modulations conceived in relation to the forms as such. While the Futurists' approach was based on the harsh clash of pure colors and a palette emphasizing complementary colors, Braque and Picasso looked to analogies of tones, not contrasts, within a limited variety of colors. "I should like my colors to be diamonds," Severini wrote, echoing an idea developed at length in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* of April 11, 1910, "and to be able to use them abundantly so as to make my pictures more

dazzling with light and richness. Before siding once and for all against Picasso and his comrades, I want to continue the analysis of them and their works. Certain of their theories appear to have a good deal of truth in them and cannot be condemned a priori: Indeed, certain of them are indisputable truths. The only thing is, I am not in rapport with their artistic expression.

"In a portrait, they say, there is no need to work out exactly the physical harmony that exists between the eyes, the nose, and the mouth, but one does need to understand the *moral* link between those details of the face; and that moral harmony can be understood and must be conveyed despite all the deformations imprinted on them by movement. If you tell them that they are drifting into caricature, they reply that their deformations are in rapport with their conception of what a picture is, that is, quite outside the physical harmony everybody understands and sees, whereas in caricature the nose is always placed beneath the eyes and the mouth beneath the nose." But "moral harmony" was exactly what the Futurists were denying in this first phase of their activity.

"The art of the Cubists," Severini observed, "beginning with Léger and up to Le Fauconnier and Metzinger traces no new path nor will it leave any trace despite the numerous imitators and the few admirers. They are still too attached to the bygone laws of plasticity to enter into the field of abstract painting or purely metaphysical expression. In fact, in some of their canvases they do not go beyond Impressionism, applying it to communicate some anecdote or other. They have their origin in Derain whose figures without chiaroscuro (Matisse fashion) seem to glorify the grotesque, but a deliberate and consciously infantile grotesque. The Cubists say they base their work on the ethics of Corot, but they follow the aesthetics of Cézanne."

This passage anticipates Guillaume Apollinaire's affirmation in *Les Peintres Cubistes* (1913) that André Derain was the real precursor of the Cubist aesthetic. But while Derain pursued a course that began with the study of Cézanne and would lead him in about 1906 to concentrate on the transposition of forms, he never analyzed subjects structurally. Yet both Severini and Apollinaire seem to have intuited that Derain's particular approach played a fundamental part in the discovery of the aesthetic possibilities of African art, its primitive imagery and its reduction to essentials. Certainly Apollinaire and Severini saw much of each other in 1911 and may well have exchanged opinions on the burning issues of the day.

As Severini saw it, "only Picasso and Braque, who only recently broke with the Cubists, have a formidable, new boldness. They truly take as little as possible from nature and break away from all the laws of art accepted till today. They do not paint forms and colors but sensations, and because of their total renunciation of the laws of art, I believe they are closer to literature than to painting. In fact, if it is true that artistic expression needs to be liberated from atavistic slavery to form, and that form must be subjected to all the sensations and deformations due both to movement and to the almost simultaneous succession of different impressions on the retina, it is also true that (to remain in the field of painting) certain artistic principles must be retained to reveal the cause of the sensation the painter expresses. Those principles are moreover exclusively intuitive, and therefore often confuse the sensation with the cause that produced it. And perhaps this is why those two artists, and Picasso in particular, are often suspected of bluffing, and their sincerity is questioned by the majority of people. They can also be accused of being one-sided because both of them, with an identical manner of coloring and with the same rhythm of line, always express the same sensation.



Gino Severini, *Dynamism of a Dancer* (*Dinamismo di una danzatrice*), 1912. Pinacoteca di Brera (Collezione Jucker), Milan



Jean Metzinger, *The Dancer*, 1912. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

"Be that as it may, they are the most interesting artists of our age, and their art is one of our Futurist verities. . . . One needs to be grateful to the Cubists for the formidable slap in the face they have given the Academy and the public that enjoys commonplace expressions that call for no effort. They aspire to lead the public toward a new aesthetic and in that respect are admirable. They want no more landscapes with dazzling colors. Nature is too materially beautiful and kind to the eye. To our tormented souls all that healthy delight in color and line is as irksome as the laughter of children amusing themselves while we are gnawed by doubt. If a modern painter wishes to spare modern spirits, who seek new and profound sensations in art, the noisome impression of that importunate laughter, he must garner in life other beauties than the physical ones of color and form; color and form should no longer exist save in the guise of sensations and not as goal in themselves. Here is our point of contact with the truth of Braque and Picasso, whom I classify with the name of neo-artists."

When Boccioni received Severini's long letter he had very likely not yet written the text for the lecture he would give in May 1911 at the Circolo Artistico in Rome. Certainly his friend's ideas and his highly detailed descriptions of the current innovations in the Paris art world must have come as a boon. The letter, along with Soffici's article on Braque and Picasso in *La Voce*, must have played a large part in persuading Boccioni to make a sortie to the French capital, which he did in October.

A previously unpublished letter (now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York) by Boccioni dated October 15, 1911, indicates that he arrived in Paris some ten days after the

Salon d'Automne opened: "I have already seen the modern painters who interested me. I will continue to study them, but I see that I had already intuited virtually everything about them and it is merely a certain outward look they have (due to the enormous *incredible* influence of Cézanne and Gauguin and others) that makes the ideas of some of them appear more daring than they really are. Of the Cubists I have not yet seen Picasso, Braque, and a few others. Of those I have seen—Metzinger, Fauconnier, Léger, Gleize [sic], etc.—only the first is really venturing into an unexplored field . . . but what metaphysics!! Everything I myself have done in the way of metaphysics (physical transcendentalism) is still something of an absolute reality. . . .

"It is strange how nothing, *absolutely nothing*, has escaped me of what goes to make up the complex of aspirations of the finest modern painting! I say strange because, thinking of Italy, I marvel that I haven't died there of drowning. . . . And now that I am about to touch shore I think with infinite tenderness of the person who helped me keep afloat in that sad sea of social and intellectual mediocrity which is Italy today! I have a great longing to return. I have to work like a madman, even if it kills me, but it is sad to think that I will have to spend my entire life sweeping up Italy's trash and refuse! Here I am extremely well known among the young artists and my incognito under my mother's name Forlani has given me a lot of amusement.

"At the Bal de la Galette last evening word got around among a band of Italian painters that I was there, and throughout the evening they all buzzed about our group. Finally one of them came up to me and asked if I was Boccioni. I replied yes but that having left in Italy all my ideas about painting, I wanted to have a rest and avoid all discussion. There were introductions, and a Genoese painter with a horrific look of *bohème* poured out all his woes to me. . . . The young man ruling the roost here now is Picasso. There is much talk about him, and the dealers put his tiniest and most insignificant pen-and-ink sketches in their windows in huge sumptuous and even antique frames and, underneath, with great ostentation: *Picasso*(!). It is a real and marvelous launching, and the painter scarcely finishes a work before it is carted off and paid for by the dealers in competition with each other."

Boccioni had been in Paris only two days but had already seen the works of most of the Cubists who interested him. His first reaction was defensive. He claimed he had already intuited what the artists were up to from Severini's description; this was not an idle boast, as can be seen in the text of the lecture he had given five months earlier. His letter indicates that the indebtedness to Cubism some find in him has been asserted much too strongly and at times too uncritically. Cubism was, of course, extremely important in the forging of the Futurist aesthetic, but it is also true that for years Boccioni had been developing new ideas that only needed to be put to the test—therein lies the importance of his trip to Paris in the fall of 1911.

This was not Boccioni's first visit. He had been in Paris for a few months in 1906 when he was overwhelmed by the look and feel of that great city. Rome had a population of five hundred thousand—a village compared to the Parisian megalopolis. "Think of the thousands of carriages," he wrote to his family on April 17, 1906, "and the hundreds of omnibuses, horse-drawn, electric, and steam-driven trams, all double-deckers, and the motorized taxicabs in the streets; think of the Metropolitan, an electrified railway that runs under all of Paris and the tickets are bought by going down into great underground places entirely illuminated by electric light; the ferry boats, exactly like those in Venice and always

packed with people. It is something simply past believing. In the midst of all this movement put thousands of bicycles, lorries, carts and wagons, private automobiles, delivery bicycles. . . . The streets are full of advertisements; signs even on the roofs; cafés by the thousands all with tables outside and all of them packed; in the midst of all this three million souls who rush about wildly, run, laugh, who work out deals, and so on and so on as much as you want. . . .

"I have seen women such as I never imagined could exist! They are entirely painted: hair, lashes, eyes, cheeks, lips, ears, neck, shoulders, bosom, hands and arms! But painted in a manner so marvelous, so skillful, so refined, as to become works of art. And note that this is done even by those of low station. They are not painted to compensate for nature; they are painted for style, and with the liveliest colors. Imagine: hair of the most beautiful gold topped by little hats that seem songs in themselves—marvelous! The face pale, with a pallor of white porcelain; the cheeks lightly rosy, the lips of pure carmine shaped clearly and boldly; the ears pinkish; the neck, nape, and bosom very white. The hands and arms painted in such a way that everyone has very white hands attached by the most delicate wrists to arms lovely as music" (Birolli 1971, pp. 332–38).

In October 1907 Boccioni again visited Paris, this time for a week. When he returned to Milan, he was exhausted and racked by doubt. He was seized by violently religious and metaphysical emotion and felt impelled to delve into the depths of the spiritual and physical worlds. Between late 1909 and early 1910 the discouraged young artist met the self-styled "caffeine of Europe," Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, poet by trade and firebrand by inclination. The encounter infused Boccioni with a new vitality. While the works he produced at that portentous moment of his life do not depart from traditional pictorial formulas, they push to an extreme a Divisionism marked by intense color and complex brushwork.

With the parturition of the Futurist movement the troubled artist would suddenly win greater assurance. He would throw himself into a life outside his narrow world, open himself to the risks of unrestrained emotion. He would move ever further away from a traditional conception of form and, at last, venture into the exploration of himself and his art that he had been contemplating for years. In 1910, when he began work on *The City Rises* (no. 50), he would declare that he had meditated on the idea of the picture for four full years, that he had worked painfully and obsessively on that whirling frenzy of colors which, original as it is, still bears the stamp of a markedly Symbolist approach.

For years he had been pondering the problem of how to represent modern life, and it was in large measure the contact with the great urban world of Paris that finally moved him to create more modern, more timely expressive forms. The adventure of Futurism, launched in 1910 with an intense theoretical program formulated in its manifestos, unleashed the twenty-eight-year-old's pent-up aggression. For all the new movement's determination to stir up an Italy still dreaming of its past, Paris was the artistic heart and center of the world, and Paris would be the Futurists' touchstone and lodestar.

When Boccioni went off to Paris in October 1911, he was already pondering the ideas that underlie *States of Mind* (no. 56), the canvases he completed in the months just before they were shown at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune. If Boccioni's conception was tainted by a certain evocative Symbolism, it nonetheless already involved a dynamic element that is unrelated to the Cubists' frigid and static optic. The works by Le Fauconnier and Gleizes that Boccioni saw at the Salon d'Automne and mentioned in his letter were perhaps too

descriptive for the budding Futurist, and Léger's canvas had in fact been criticized by Apollinaire as a modest product of a still unripe personality. Room 8 in the exhibition which housed those artists had been dubbed "Cubist" by the poet-critic who made much of the fact that they had now truly taken on the character of a school. In Room 8 there were also works by the brothers Marcel Duchamp and Jacques Villon whose acquaintance Boccioni would make a few months later on the occasion of the Futurist exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune. Duchamp was then working on *Nude Descending a Staircase*, a painting which, criticized by Gleizes, would be refused by the Salon des Indépendants in March 1912.

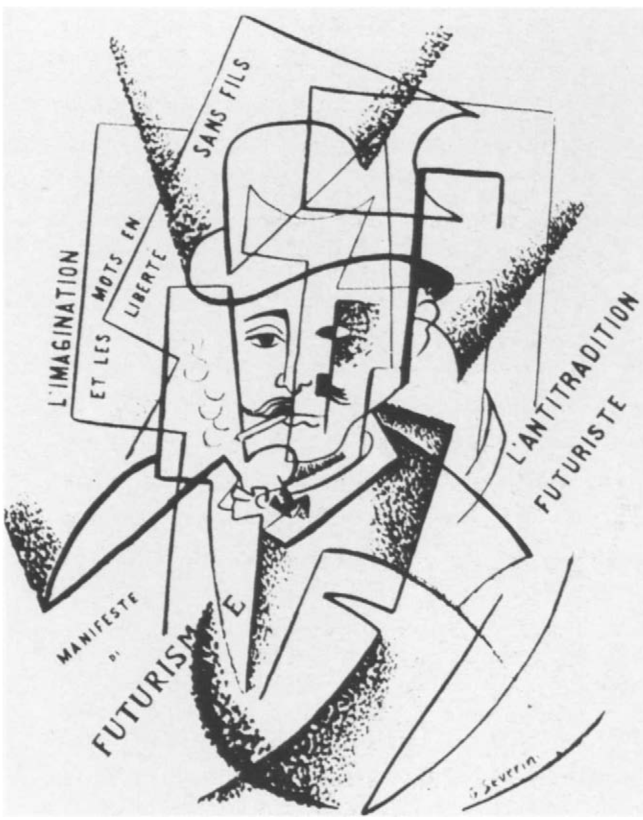
In *Souvenirs: Le Cubisme 1908–1914*, the memoirs he wrote during World War II, Gleizes recalled the excitement of the exhibition opening: "The ensemble no longer presented the homogeneity of Room 41. The representatives of orthodox Cubism—Le Fauconnier, Léger, Metzinger, and myself—found themselves side by side with artists having only remote resemblances to them, who did not have the same point of departure and who would for a long time or forever deny any connection with Cubism. . . . In any case, despite that lack of homogeneity, the ensemble had a fine provocative air about it. In those painters one sensed an air of battle. . . . Very curious, that rush of visitors denser in that year of 1911 than in earlier years because they had been alerted by items in the newspapers announcing the participation of the 'Cubists' whose appearance, six months earlier, had been a surprise."

Boccioni arrived in Paris just as the new movement was taking off. Picasso and Braque, who did not choose to show with the other artists, were not, however, classified as Cubists, and in fact Gleizes and Picasso would not meet until after the inauguration of the Salon d'Automne. Boccioni declared that the artist who impressed him most was Jean Metzinger, because his theoretical position was both more advanced and clearer than that of the other Cubists (Picasso and Braque as always excepted). Metzinger had published articles on the relationship between the new art and the classical tradition and, in addition, called for a "totality" in painting that would synthesize all possible views of the object represented. Apollinaire's review of the Salon d'Automne stressed Metzinger's richness of imagination and profound culture, noting that he had finally shaken off the influence of Picasso so conspicuous in his earlier paintings. His compositional structures, once very similar to Picasso's, were now being simplified and resolved in a manner less volumetric and more confined to the picture surface. Unlike works from the same time by the first Cubists, his paintings treat the decomposition of the image without aiming at three-dimensionality. He emphasized instead the intersection of planes without overly stressing the feeling of form. In Metzinger's works of this period there is a certain effort at abstraction, but he still appears the most naturalistic of the Cubist group. The abstraction of the forms, which may have been what appealed to Boccioni in Metzinger's work, was based on very different values from his. For Boccioni the new form and the new color, as he had proclaimed in his lecture of the preceding May, must arise out of the emotion aroused by the subject itself.

Boccioni met Apollinaire in the fall of 1911. "I have not yet seen any Futurist pictures," the critic wrote in the *Mercure de France* in November, "but if I have understood correctly the point of the new Italian painters' experiments they are concerned above all with expressing feelings, virtually states of the soul (this is an expression used by M. Boccioni himself), and with expressing them in the most forceful manner possible. These young people also desire to move away from natural forms and claim to be the inventors of their art." With a tone of half-amusement half-irony Apollinaire also made much of Severini's

whim of wearing socks of different colors. Fernande Olivier, Picasso's mistress at the time, also mentioned this detail and described Boccioni's first meeting with Picasso: "During the winter after the return from Céret—Picasso had spent the summer of 1911 there together with Braque working in isolation—the Italian Futurists burst upon Montmartre convoyed by Marinetti whom Apollinaire was simply dotty about. Naturally enough they came to Picasso's. Severini as well as Boccioni who died in the war were hot-headed fanatics who dreamed of a Futurism dethroning Cubism. They made a great thing out of their professions of faith. . . . They tried to give themselves bizarre airs, attempting to stand out physically at least, to create a sensation, but their means were mediocre and they often made themselves ridiculous. Boccioni and Severini, leaders among the painters, had inaugurated a Futurist fashion which consisted in wearing two socks of different colors but that matched their ties" (Olivier 1933).

Even before their introductory exhibition the young Futurists elbowed their way into the Parisian art scene spoiling for a fight. To impress that (presumably) hostile (or merely indifferent?) world, no weapon was neglected: rhetoric, dialectic, debate, demonstrations, unmatched socks. No surprise then that these foreign artists were greeted with a certain wariness. If nothing else, with their theories and their pictures (it is difficult to say which were more disturbing) they were introducing still greater confusion into a situation already far from clear-cut. Having prepared a bumpy way for themselves, they made their official bow before the Parisian public in February 1912. The preface to the catalogue of their show



Gino Severini, cartoon (ca. 1913), with portrait of F. T. Marinetti. Photo: Paolo Pellegrin. Courtesy Severini archive, Rome



Carlo Carrà, ca. 1914. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan

at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune was written in the aggressive language characteristic of their manifestos. Though the preface was signed by the Futurist quintet Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini, a note made it clear that the ideas expressed had been propounded by Boccioni in his lecture of May 1911. The stand they took against the Cubists was harsh and unequivocal, and their shrill tone antagonized critics and artists alike.

From their first programmatic pronunciamentos the Futurists had brandished the banner of Modernism. The time, they announced, was overripe for new aesthetic canons, and they were prepared to invent them. Modernism called for new and regenerating ideas, for broadly comprehensive images for which reality was a source of inspiration but not the measuring rod. The Futurists were the first to declare the aesthetic of the machine and of speed as the single all-decisive principle for a cultural ideology. In his lecture of 1911 Boccioni had grappled with the dilemma of how one could represent modern life. To be truly modern a work of art had to mirror the urgent and relentless rhythms of the new times, had to strip away every trace of concern with the object as such which had made fleeting phenomena cold and lifeless.

Theories notwithstanding, in the works Boccioni showed in Paris the relationship with reality was still very strong and was rendered in a contradictory manner. The objective fact, the given, the point of departure constantly broke through to the fore no matter how it was swept along in the impetus of the movement and deformed by force-lines. The Futurists' extrovert art, which shone—glared—with violent colors and swift, aggressive images was completely different from the introverted experiments of the Cubists who conceived of a work of art as an object in itself whose form obeyed no laws outside itself. With their tense straining toward the future and toward a modern ideal, the Futurists transformed the very meaning of the object, while for the Cubists the object was a stable point on which to build their reflective vision.

The theory of physical transcendentalism—of moving beyond the physical properties and limitations of "real" things—that Boccioni seems to pit against Cubist theories was based on an absolutism that arose from the Symbolist sensibility. The philosophical ideas of Henri Bergson—which stressed reliance on intuition and held that individual consciousness was superior to all closed systems and rigid mental categories—had been circulating for some time in French and Italian intellectual circles (his *L'Evolution créatrice* had appeared in Paris in 1907); Boccioni could certainly have been influenced by him.

"All objects," according to the catalogue of the first Futurist show in Paris, "in line with what the painter Boccioni felicitously calls *physical transcendentalism* tend toward the infinite by their *force-lines* whose continuity is measured by our own intuition." This statement sums up the fundamental difference between the Futurists and the Cubists. But when the Futurists (Boccioni in particular) attacked Cubism, their opposition was directed mainly toward the pictorial illusionism and the emphasis on the flatness of the canvas that were characteristic of the second generation of Cubists. While insisting on their profound ideological differences from Picasso and Braque, the Futurists maintained a respectful attitude toward those two artists, which increased over the years (this is especially notable in Boccioni's admiration for Picasso).

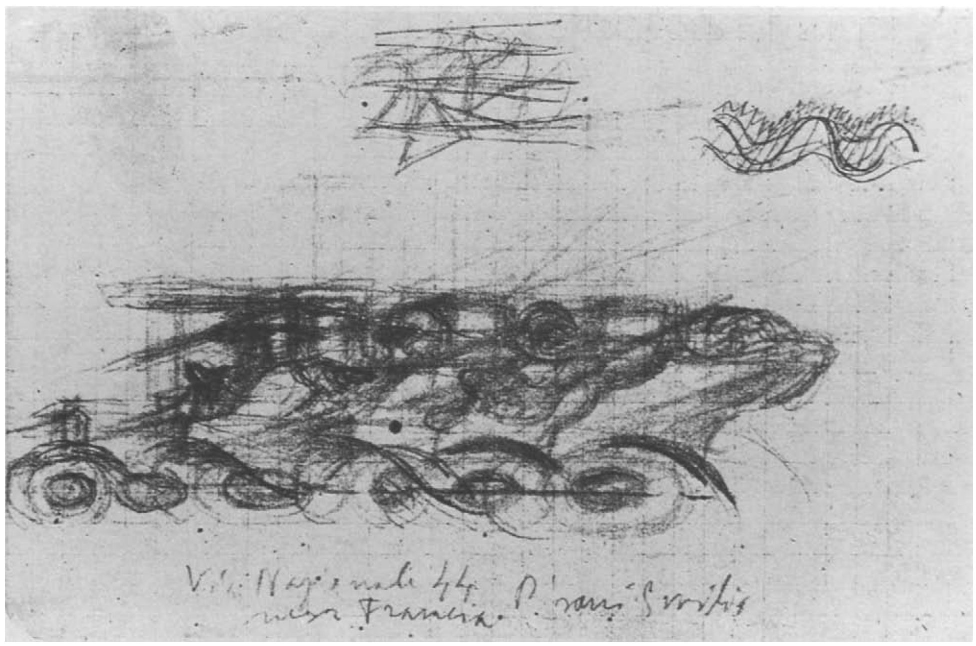
Gertrude Stein knew every corner and secret of the French art world, and her greatest admiration was reserved for her friend Pablo Picasso. It was through him that she met and entertained the Futurists in the rue de Fleurus: "It was about this time that the futurists, the

italian futurists, had their big show in Paris and it made a great deal of noise. Everybody was excited and this show being given in a very well known gallery everybody went. Jacques-Emile Blanche was terribly upset by it. We found him wandering tremblingly in the gardens of the Tuileries and he said, it looks alright but is it. No it isn't, said Gertrude Stein. You do me good, said Jacques-Emile Blanche. The futurists all of them led by Severini thronged around Picasso. He brought them all to the house. Marinetti came by himself later as I remember. In any case everybody found the futurists very dull" (Stein 1946, p. 82).

While Stein was strenuously championing Picasso's talent and conception of form, Apollinaire was beginning to turn his back on all that and to campaign for a brand of Cubism he baptized "Orphic" and whose boldest representative was Robert Delaunay. At this time Metzinger and Gleizes brought out their book *Du Cubisme* which proposed an aesthetic based on the approach to form practiced by Cézanne and Derain.

In the midst of these more or less open disputes the Futurists came in search of a corner for themselves in the crowded, unsettled Parisian art scene. It was refused them. Only Gustave Kahn and Félix Fénéon, longtime friends of Marinetti, praised the new movement though less for the right reasons than because of the residue of the Symbolist spirit in Futurism which characterized their own approach. (A generous selection of reviews of the Futurist exhibition is found in Lista 1986.) For Apollinaire, Futurism was merely an Italian imitation of the French schools, in particular of the Fauves and Cubists. He criticized the Futurists' dispersion of the image and their insistence on representing various aspects of reality filtered through emotions without taking into account the element of time. Against that approach he held up that of the Cubists who brought together in a single object all the various perceptions and reduced them to a single phenomenon. But Delaunay remained for him the artist who could best express the modern spirit. Delaunay's colored



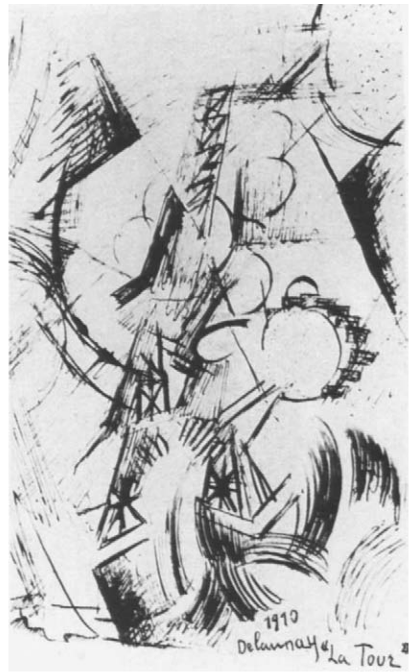


Giacomo Balla, *Study of a Moving Automobile* (*Studio di un'automobile in movimento*), ca. 1912. Private collection, Rome

Umberto Boccioni (left) and F. T. Marinetti in front of Boccioni's *The Laugh* (no. 53) during the Futurist exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, in 1912. Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua



Carlo Carrà, *The Swimmers* (*Nuotatrici*), 1910. Museum of Art (Gift of G. David Thompson, 1955), Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh



Robert Delaunay, *The Eiffel Tower* (*La Tour*), 1910. Collection Sonia Delaunay, Paris

volumes and rejection of the laws of perspective were entirely apt, Apollinaire thought, for subjects based on a new reality, such as the paintings of the Eiffel Tower he began in 1909. For Delaunay the Eiffel Tower was his *compotier*, his substitute for the standard fruit dish painted over and over by one Cubist after another. Quite unlike the Picasso or Braque still lifes, here was a subject aggressive in character and symbolic of the new industrial era. Delaunay's dogged and obsessive repetition of the theme would lead him to disaggregate the form and to burst it asunder in an explosion of violent colors.

Around 1912 Delaunay began to paint the "simultaneous contrasts" that enchanted Apollinaire. Because of Delaunay's use of the word "simultaneity" there ensued a long and interesting debate with Boccioni which went on into early 1914. For Delaunay color had both a dynamic and a constructive value and represented at one and the same time form and subject. As the "Heresiarch of Cubism" (Apollinaire's sobriquet for Delaunay) would explain later in writing, his painting took its departure technically from color and then developed through time, though the whole of it could be perceived simultaneously in a single glance. Color thus became in itself a function of space.

Boccioni felt betrayed by Apollinaire. While the critic had never sided with the Futurists, and indeed energetically attacked certain aspects of their approach, he had nonetheless shown a certain curiosity, if not a veiled interest, and had even confided to Severini that he was preparing a book in which he would include the Futurists as "Orphics." For all their irreconcilable differences the theories of Boccioni and Delaunay had certain key words in common, most notably the term "simultaneity." For Boccioni this signified simultaneous representation of states of mind, toward which end he strove to reproduce the plastic

sensations of the subject and its setting in a single profoundly unified vision. A painting must be a synthesis of "what is remembered and what seen" (a phrase that was used in the introduction to the catalogue of the Futurist exhibition at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune) and involve an intersection and interpenetration of lines and forms which, through the image's movement, would draw the viewer toward and into the picture's center. Simultaneity, for Boccioni, expressed the exaltation of speed, the affirmation of modernity. Place, time, form, and color coexist in a single composition conceived to bring out the object's dynamic reality through a simultaneity not limited to the simple unfurling of an action in time but embracing all the elements that could convey the sensation of speed visually. While Delaunay's theories, translated into paint, ended up by canceling out all the phenomena of exterior reality and achieving a total formal abstraction, Boccioni never lost the feel of (and for) the object, and it is this, filtered through the emotions, that gave rise to the rhythm of the signs and the vibration of the forms in his paintings.

The Futurist manifestos circulated quickly and were widely read and discussed. Propaganda was the group's most effective weapon, especially in the early period when their pictures were more in their minds than on canvas. Nonetheless this does not explain why groups and artists of a very different stripe should have held ideas so close to theirs. There is, for one, an astonishing similarity between Boccioni's theories and those Kandinsky propounded in *The Spiritual in Art*, which he published in Munich in late 1911. To begin with, the cultural climate in which the Futurists and Kandinsky developed their ideas was much the same. Whether Italian or German (or, like Kandinsky, a Russian émigré), artists were not likely to have escaped or ignored the discussions on philosophical materialism, the polemics against the positivistic scientific approach, and the scientific discoveries that were overturning traditional notions in physics and in other fields of knowledge. Einstein's theory of relativity, first formulated in 1905, upended the traditional conception of an unrelated absolute space and absolute time. The discovery of radioactive phenomena by W. K. Röntgen, A. H. Becquerel, and Ernest Rutherford meant that the idea of the atom as the ultimate physical particle had to be reconsidered and that a new science had to be established that would take into account hitherto unknown forces of radiation. Max Planck, with his quantum theory, threw open to discussion the wave theory of light. In philosophy the crisis that attended the birth pangs of the new century was sensed and expressed in a diversity of approaches: in an outburst of interest in spiritualism and the occult, in the various currents of methodological and critical investigation proposed by German thinkers, in a new psychology allowing for both conscious and unconscious factors as against the schematic explanation and positivist determinism of a Bergson.

Kandinsky maintained that nothing is absolute and that art is born out of the *principle of inner necessity*. A marked mystical strain runs through his writings: Painting, defined as pure art, is one of the manifestations of the divine; the artist's subjectivity is subordinated to an inner voice that harmonizes oppositions and contradictions. These theoretical principles are the origin of Kandinsky's visual compositions, constructed out of chromatic notes that spread like sonorous vibrations, like music, across the space of his canvases: abstract compositions that are entirely without a material objective model and that exist precisely and only because forms and colors have value in themselves.

In his 1911 lecture Boccioni expressed a very similar concept: "Only that painting will be Futurist whose colors can represent and communicate a sentiment with the min-

imum possible recourse to the concrete forms that gave rise to it." Nonetheless, for Boccioni, abstraction proceeds out of reality itself. Because the artist aims to represent the becoming, the developing, of the object, his intuition will transform elements from the external world into a creation manifesting a sense of universality. Whereas Kandinsky with his philosophical reflections immersed himself in the spiritual substance of the universe, and the Cubists sought to capture the essence of things by means of intellectual investigation, Boccioni strove to penetrate reality by contemplating the relativity of phenomena and the way they manifest themselves in relation to the absolute. This was a tortuous and difficult quest in an age of increasingly concrete thinking which impelled him to seek, as he would himself state, a new finite "symbol of our conception of the infinite."

In March 1912 the Futurists exhibited in Berlin in Herwarth Walden's Galerie Der Sturm where Delaunay and Kandinsky had shown on other occasions. Kandinsky now asked Walden not to promote these Italian artists: "You know my opinion of them. And the last manifesto (painting of noises and odors—without gray! without brown! etc.) is even more frivolous than those preceding it. Do not take this badly, dear Herr Walden, since for me likewise it is not something pleasant to talk about. But art is something sacred that *should* not be treated with such flippancy. And the Futurists merely play with the more important ideas they bring up every so often, though everything is thought through so little and so little felt. These things pain me. I know that all of this is part of our present-day life, which is infinitely varied and creates with an unprecedented multiplicity of manners. But I have none the less the right to withhold my support from elements I find antipathetic. It will be



Herwarth Walden, owner of Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin,
with his wife, Nell; behind them hang two paintings by Chagall.
Photo: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz,
Handschriftenabteilung, Berlin (West)

enough that I do not fight against them" (letter 137, dated November 12, 1913, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin).

It is obvious that the chief concern of all artists of whatever stripe was to safeguard their personal field of action, their small corner in the vast world of art. The game consisted (as it does today) in setting up a policy of alliances and oppositions which in an instant, virtually without warning, could shift out of either conviction or expediency. Such a change transformed the virtually fraternal bond between Delaunay and Apollinaire. As early as mid-1913 their accord was showing signs of strain. It was then that Apollinaire issued his own manifesto, *L'Antitradition futuriste* (dated June 29, 1913), which aimed to reconcile the Cubist and Futurist positions; he also took steps to heal the breach with Boccioni which had opened during the dispute about simultaneism. A postcard (private collection, Padua) Apollinaire sent to Boccioni early in 1914 testifies to the cordiality with which the contact was renewed: "Dear friend, Forget about Delaunay and work well; soon we shall put together an issue with reproductions of the Futurists. When do you come to Paris?"

The great mobility in the cultural would—new arrivals, upheavals, reversals, quick successes and quicker failures—induced each group to conduct its discussion in its own way. Certainly the manner the Futurists adopted topped all the others in violence and white-hot polemics. If in one sense that constituted their strength, in another it created their isolation.

On February 17, 1913, the Armory Show opened in New York. For the first time the American public was brought face to face—emphatically, even violently—with the works of those European artists who, particularly in the preceding decade, had overturned and transformed the vocabulary of traditional and academic forms in painting and sculpture. All in all the venture proved thoroughly worthwhile and had important consequences: in Europe because of the debates raging in those months over such artistic and literary currents as Cubism and its heretics, Futurism, and the "spiritualism" of a certain Russian and German tendency; in the United States because those stimulating controversies were extended to a new and fertile terrain and, above all, because on a practical plane a new and as yet unexploited market was opened up for both foreign and domestic art.

The Armory Show offered a selection from those currents that had most appealed to the organizers who, only a few months before, scarely knew more than the general talk about a Picasso or a Braque. Not everyone was satisfied. In an article titled "Evolution and Revolution in Art" published in *The International Studio* in April 1913, the critic Christian Brinton noted that the exhibition failed to provide a comprehensive and unified view of the latest tendencies. "One was not a little disconcerted to discover Klimt, Bilgas, Marc, Mestrovic, Minne and Burljuk, while such significant groups as the Dresdener Brücke, the Berliner Neue Sezession, the Münchener Neue Vereinigung, and the Stockholm Eight, not to mention Severini and the Futurists, were substantially or wholly without representation."

With Braque, Delaunay, the Duchamps, Kandinsky, Léger, Picabia, and Picasso present in the Armory Show, even if represented by only a limited number of pieces, why were the Futurists excluded? Their name at least was known, however much misinterpreted and misused. The term "futurist" appears again and again in the blizzard of articles the Armory Show elicited; it was almost always used erroneously to describe, usually pejoratively, anything considered to be avant-garde. No end of Cubist works were labeled "futurist," and it was the adjective most frequently applied to Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

The appearance in America of the artists who were legitimately termed Futurists was eagerly anticipated. The organizers of the Armory Show had offered the Futurists a room in which their works could be shown together and thereby avoid confusion with the lowercase "futurists." Why did the group decline the invitation? In November 1912 the organizers met in Paris with Severini and Boccioni, who was making a brief visit to that city. In a letter that seems to date from that month Boccioni wrote to his fellow Futurist Carlo Carrà asking him what Futurist projects were planned and what agreements had been reached concerning the exhibitions in which members could or should take part. Boccioni turned to Carrà for this information because Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the literary and artistic *capo* of the Futurist movement, was in the Balkans as a war correspondent. Marinetti's Milan home had become the Futurists' headquarters and meeting place, the site of their discussions and debates, and the place they received their mail. Its "official" status is confirmed by the fact that its address appears on all the Futurist manifestos put out in those years.

As it happened, shortly before the approach from the American organizers, the group had been invited to participate in a Rome exhibition, one whose title constituted a program and, for Italy, a challenge: the First International Roman Secession Exhibition. Planned to run from March 31 through June 30, 1913, its aim was to extend Italian artistic debate into a broader, European context like that created in Austria and Germany by the Sezession exhibitions. Among those already committed to lend Impressionist works were the same Parisian galleries that had promised their collaboration to the Americans, including Galerie Bernheim-Jeune where the Futurists had already shown.

The Rome exhibition was designed as a homage to Impressionists and Divisionists with emphasis on Italian Symbolists with French antecedents; paradoxically the latter represented a more advanced position than the D'Annunzio-influenced approach of the Italian official and academic painters. The selection committee included Giacomo Balla, onetime teacher of Boccioni and Severini and himself a signatory of the Futurist manifesto on painting. An influential member of the committee, he saw to it that his Futurist comrades were invited to take part in what was planned to be a major event in Rome.

If the Futurists opted to show in Rome, however, they could not join in the Armory Show since the dates overlapped. In his letter to Carrà mentioned above, Boccioni instructed him to "go to Marinetti's and have them show you his correspondence. From the envelopes, I hope, you will be able to see if there is a letter from Balla or from the Secession committee. If you find a letter, write and tell me what it says. . . . Wire [Rome] to get a categorical reply about the exhibition at the Secession. In any case and as soon as you have any news write or wire me at Severini's. All of this because we are invited to show in New York with Picasso, Braque, the Cubists, Cézanne, etc. . . . The matter would be of no interest to me if one of my friends had not written to Severini that he has heard about a forthcoming Futurist show in New York. This (I imagine) is the work of Dr. Borchardt who for purposes of outright speculation, with the paintings bought at half price, is moving ahead of us and despoiling all the most important cities in the world. Our triumphal entry into all the capitals is completely compromised! This really annoys me and will annoy Marinetti even more to whom I am writing right away. . . . Besides, we are committed to Amsterdam, I think, with the contract for April 1913" (Archivi del Futurismo 1962, vol. 1, pp. 246–47; corrected following original in Carrà archives, Milan).



Boccioni in Paris(?), ca. 1912.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy
private archive, Padua

Immediately after their first show in Paris at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in February and March 1912, the Futurists were, as mentioned above, given another exhibition, this one in Berlin at the invitation of Herwarth Walden, the German poet and journalist who had recently taken to promoting new art. The Futurists' show was only the second such undertaking of this enthusiast. Long interested in Symbolist and Expressionist currents, he was now championing somewhat more innovative trends in both literature and the visual arts through his review *Der Sturm* and the Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin. On the face of it the Berlin show was an unexpected success. A single collector, the Wolfgang Borchardt mentioned in Boccioni's letter to Carrà, bought twenty-one paintings, almost all of those on



The room of Futurist works at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, 1915. In the center is Boccioni's sculpture *Muscles in Movement* (*Muscoli in velocità,* 1913), which was later destroyed. Photo: G. Lista, *Il Futurismo,* 1986

view, as a block. This windfall was, however, a far from unmixed blessing. The transaction was completed very slowly because the purchaser found it difficult, he said, to pay the artists in full. (It cannot be ruled out that this apparent Maecenas was fronting for Walden, whose promotion of the avant-garde may have been a crass scheme to profit from the craze for the very latest in the arts.) The Italian artists were suspicious of such a conspicuous, almost wholesale purchase of their works (still of untested commercial value), and Boccioni's concern about Borchardt's injudicious and badly timed presentations of Futurist art in all the major centers was doubtless justified.

"If I had not been in Paris," Boccioni wrote further to Carrà, "Severini would have known nothing about previous commitments or anything else, and everything was heading toward disaster with commitments and counter-commitments. Anyway, if Marinetti wants well-staged entries (and he is right) he ought to see to them himself: War is beautiful, just looking at it is better, but our and my future matters more to me. . . . Write me what you think about New York. The whole thing is free. A hall 16 meters by 8 [52½ by 26¼ feet]: shipment December 7. Only drawbacks: lack of [separate] Futurist entrance, Rome exhibition: Amsterdam exhibition."

Marinetti returned to Milan just about the time Boccioni wrote to Carrà. The *capogruppo* reacted strongly to Boccioni's complaints about Borchardt's raids on the Futurists' potential European market and, notably, its German sector. On November 15, 1912, the fiery, Machiavellian impresario wrote to Walden: "We are very angry with you for not letting us know about the various exhibitions of Futurist painting you have organized with Dr. Borchardt. It would have been useful to do so, in the interest of those exhibitions themselves. . . . We are

extremely angry because in your lectures you have jumbled together the Futurists with the Expressionists and others who have nothing to do with our movement. I have written a long letter to Dr. Borchardt on this subject. I beg you to *read it with due attention. No one* among the *Futurist painters, those truly Futurist*, that is, the *founders Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Severini, has exhibited in the Salon d'Automne*. But in that Salon there are a good many Cubist, Post-Impressionist, and other painters who imitate the Futurists. They are all *epigones*, as you yourself call them, who are now turning away from cold and static Cubism and are making a great effort to produce *pictorial dynamism, compenetration of planes*, and *painting of states of mind*, etc. We are therefore all the more distressed to see that you, our great friend and such a brilliant connoisseur of art, are increasing *the confusion the world press is creating* by considering as Futurist all those who imitate our movement in painting.

"We therefore wish to be informed about the exhibitions you are preparing, and we want those *exhibitions to include exclusively genuinely Futurist pictures*. Write me immediately if it is true that you are preparing an exhibition in New York, because in that case I would plan to give lectures in that city" (Archivi del Futurismo 1962, vol. 1, p. 253).

Marinetti's letter makes it clear how strenuously he was prepared to defend the position of his quintet of artists and to brook no confusion with other artistic trends. He was more and more convinced that the group's success depended on maintaining its individuality and autonomy.

On November 15, the same day he wrote to Walden, Marinetti wired Boccioni in Paris: "Hope to receive telegram from Rome tomorrow. Will advise you by telegram. Waiting for reply Walden about New York. We are all absolutely against exhibition with Cubists New York. Wire me if remaining in Paris for long. Greetings to Severini. . . . Yours Marinetti" (private archive, Padua).

Marinetti's chief reasons for refusing the invitation to the Armory Show must have been his protective feelings for his Futurist artists and his fear of compromising more interesting prospects. Consultation with Carrà and Russolo, the only members of the group then in Milan, could only have confirmed his own opinion that exhibiting alongside the rival and even enemy group would only compound the existing confusion between Futurists and Cubists. There was no further discussion about Futurist participation in the American exhibition. Their refusal was a gallant or perhaps a provocative gesture, but it effectively cut them off from the potential support of the dealers, galleries, critics, and patrons across the Atlantic.

It did not take the Futurists long, interested as they were in self-promotion, to realize the chance they had missed. American collectors were snapping up the work of the other European avant-garde artists, and this was a market the Futurists could not afford to overlook. It was proving difficult to make a place for themselves outside Italy; in France and Germany, where they had hoped to find an enlightened public, they were beginning to be regarded with a certain hostility. In Italy it would require a slow and patient effort to bring the national artistic consciousness into the twentieth century, and the moderation and tolerant persistence necessary was not in the Futurists' character. And there were subterranean rumblings in the European political and economic situation hinting of the world conflict that would explode in the summer of 1914 and would encompass Italy as well after a year of neutrality. Thus, although it was a time when their efforts were turned to urging Italian intervention against the Austrian "occupier" of Northern Italy, the group accepted the

invitation that came to them at the end of 1914 to show in San Francisco, at the Panama Pacific International Exposition celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal. Yet here again things would not go smoothly for the Italian group; a new international market would not be opened to them.

The Futurist works were probably transported to San Francisco from London where they had recently been. After the Panama Pacific International Exposition closed on December 1, the paintings and sculptures remained in San Francisco for some months since the international section in which they were shown remained open until May. Whatever their expectations, the Futurists passed almost unnoticed. The war in Europe, which had entered a critical phase, was a more absorbing topic than "modernistic" art, and many years would pass before American interest would quicken with regard to this art.

Detail of no. 55A ▷

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS



1A. *Young Man on a Riverbank* (recto)
Giovane sulla riva di un fiume 1902

B. *Study of a Wagnerian Scene* (verso)
Studio di composizione 1902 (?)

Recto: gouache and colored charcoal on paper
Verso: pencil on paper
11¾ × 8⅝ in. (29.8 × 21.9 cm.)
Signed and dated lower right (recto): B. 902
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Young Man on a Riverbank is the earliest known work by Boccioni. Although Ballo has dated it 1908–1909 on the basis of stylistic resemblances to works of that period, there is no reason to doubt that the date 1902 at the lower right was written by Boccioni himself when he painted the picture. Both composition and technique reveal a beginner's uncertain hand or at any rate an artist whose technical command is not completely developed, further disproving Ballo's dating, since by 1908–1909 Boccioni's treatment was secure and rapid. Yet already, in this youthful work, the artist was using an untraditional viewpoint and establishing an emphatic contrast between foreground figure and background plane. There is no gradual transition between topographical elements: The contrast between them is deliberately emphasized in the figure seen from the rear, which serves as the only link among them and creates a curious disproportion in the overall image.

This picture was undoubtedly created during the artist's Roman years, and the scene —a bend in a river, possibly the Aniene or the Tiber, both of which flow across the Roman countryside—connects it with a passage Gino Severini wrote in 1945, recalling his close ties with Boccioni when both were young. In about 1900, when Severini first knew him, the young Boccioni had moved to Rome from Sicily where he had been living with his father; he had only elementary skills in drawing and was taking lessons from a poster painter much in fashion at the time. On one of their first excursions to try their hand at copying from nature, the two young artists went outside the city walls one Sunday morning: "When we arrived at Ponte Nomentano he sat down alongside me on an outcropping almost in midstream, took out a piece of paper, and began to draw the bridge. I messed about with my poor colors with a dogged determination that only took me further from any satisfactory result. From time to time I looked over at Boccioni's sheet of paper, but his drawing was always at the same point. He had done it and redone it at least twenty times without ever succeeding in getting the entire bridge on the sheet. Each time he began at the left and continued doing one detail after another right across the page to the right margin. When he got there he realized he had drawn scarcely half the bridge. My poor friend puffed and panted, was in a sweat, got red in the face and furious, and then suddenly asked me, 'How do you ever manage to get the whole thing onto your little page?'"



1A



1B

A few studies in perspective and of places and buildings in the city belong to the same period as this gouache. All of them are characterized by an effort to push to the limit the possibilities of a viewpoint that is never directly frontal. The view is almost always foreshortened, looking from below to above or vice versa, and Boccioni would increasingly concern himself with this compositional device, especially in his Roman period.

On the verso is a very rapid and summary pencil sketch of a scene Taylor (1961b) calls "Wagnerian," evidently a compositional study based on a painting or engraving of a warlike episode.

LITERATURE: No. 1A—Taylor 1961a, p. 22 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 1 (1909); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 53; Ballo 1964, no. 123, p. 488 (1908–1909); Bruno 1969, no. 1; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 5

No. 1B—Taylor 1961b, no. 1a (ca. 1910); Ballo 1964, no. 350 (1910); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 633

2. *Roman Landscape*
Campagna romana 1903

Oil on canvas
24¾ × 48 in. (63 × 122 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom left: Umberto Boccioni 1903
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

This work bears the earliest date of any of Boccioni's known canvases. The signature and date at the bottom left—*Umberto Boccioni 1903*—are written in block letters and framed by a thin red line. Close examination, however, reveals that this inscription covers another signature that has been canceled out. This type of inscription is found in other works by Boccioni from around 1908, for example, *Lombard Landscape* (no. 23A), but for known works catalogued so far, there are no similar signatures before 1908. That fact, along with certain technical factors, suggests that the canvas may have been retouched in 1908, five years after it was painted. The paint is full-bodied and built up considerably, with dabs and clots that cause multiple coloristic reflections. This, together with the fact that a sense of distance is achieved through variegated paint thicknesses, can be taken as a sign of an artist already fully formed and no longer tentative in his procedures. Further, while the quality of the paint treatment suggests a date later than the one given in the signature, the horizontal plan and decidedly nineteenth-century organization tend to confirm the earlier date. Moreover, there is concrete evidence that the work was conceived in 1903. In an unpublished letter to his sister dated August 4 of that year, Boccioni drew a pen sketch of a composition that is very close to the finished canvas. The drawing was accompanied by a rather high-sounding phrase: "The subject I am sketching for you here is extremely simple and, precisely because of that, *terribile*."

Conspicuous here are the influence of the rural symbolism of Pellizza da Volpedo and the example of Giacomo Balla, whose studio was much frequented by the young Boccioni and Severini. Balla had returned to Rome in March 1901 after spending seven months in Paris where he saw firsthand the new developments in painting after Impressionism. His teaching was based on the study of new techniques in the use of color, on optical sensations, and on the effect produced by juxtaposing contrasting colors, and he demonstrated his theories in paintings that have an exacerbated realism. In a 1916 essay in honor of his teacher, Boccioni wrote: "Balla's value did not lie in the, so to speak, ethical significance he attributed to his paintings but in the stubborn quest for subjects that would war against the run-of-the-mill look of pictures. He carried on a struggle against the Sublime with a superhuman solitary labor of almost mystical severity. We young men were drawn to him: Sironi, Boccioni, Severini, Constantini. To shake off the artificially prettified quality of art found in Rome, Balla saw that the only salvation was to plunge deeply into a kind of scientific sensibility. . . . The more art struck him as sweet, romantic, and sentimental, the more he strove for a reaction through a scientifically exact mortification of reality. . . . Balla fears emotion as a weakness, and there you have in essence the antiliterary and antisentimental stance of modern art."

Balla taught his young students to lay out the planes of a picture correctly and to set up a perspective that would not be merely banally descriptive but analytic, thus ensuring that the forms would acquire greater force. In the present picture the composition is almost completely flattened. The cow, set very high, is rendered with painstaking detail, while the rest of the image is painted with oblique and Divisionist brushwork and with a very



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dense impasto of color built up over color.

The painting was first shown under the title *Meriggio (Midday)* in the 1904 exhibition of the Amatori e Cultori, an annual event at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. That same year Balla presented his *Bankruptcy*, which Severini would describe years later, emphasizing its overly realistic approach: "It showed the lower part of a shop, shut down because of bankruptcy. The shutters, no longer open, derelict, filthy, covered with doll-like figures and hieroglyphs that children had drawn in chalk, truly suggested neglect and sadness. In a corner of the stone step there was a magnificently rendered glob of spit."

On April 5, 1908, Boccioni noted in his diary: "Have sold the picture *Midday (Roman Countryside)* to Signor Gabriele Chiattone for reproduction. Took 80 lire." And again, in the list of works sold, after August 24, 1908, he wrote: "To Signor Gabriele Chiattone a landscape done in Rome and exhibited in Lugano [as] *Midday*. Eighty lire. Good." Boccioni had come to know the Chiattone family in Milan and had been particularly friendly with one of the sons, Mario, an architect who for some years would be close to Antonio Sant'Elia and to Futurist ideas. Gabriele Chiattone owned a printing house—which explains the comment "for reproduction"—and usually bought directly from the artist, who was often in financial difficulty. The Chiattone family would later bequeath to the Museo Civico di Belle Arti, Lugano, twenty-two works by Boccioni, all from his pre-Futurist period.

It is likely that when the present painting was sold to Chiattone, Boccioni retouched it, freshening the color and adding the gloss that makes it resemble his 1908 works. Three small preparatory studies for this painting have been found among Boccioni's papers.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1904, no. 965 (*Meriggio*); Milan 1916–17, no. 92; Milan 1960, no. 1; Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 9; Verona 1985–86, no. 7

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 33; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 2; Ballo 1964, no. 2; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 182, no. 2208; Bruno 1969, no. 2; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 8

3. *Cloister of S. Onofrio*
Chiostro 1904

Oil on canvas
27½ × 38⅝ in. (70 × 98 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Boccioni Padova 1904
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

There are at least four small preparatory studies in which the composition of this painting is laid out from different angles. Since one of the pencil sketches is inscribed "S. Onofrio," the cloister depicted can be identified with certainty. Only one drawing (8¼ × 11 in. [20.8 × 28.1 cm.]; private collection, Padua) has the same basic composition as the definitive painting. The finished painting has details not found in any of the preparatory drawings, among them the tree and fence at the right.

The church of Sant'Onofrio is located on the Janiculum, one of the most picturesque sites in Rome. An impressive panorama extends from the neighboring piazza, ranging from Castel Sant'Angelo to Palazzo Farnese. The church was founded in 1419 by Nicola de Forca Palena, a member of the Hermits of Saint Jerome. The interior of the single-naved edifice contains paintings by Antoniazzo Romano, Agostino Carracci, and Domenichino. The adjoining monastery, where the poet Torquato Tasso died in 1595, has a rectangular cloister constructed in the mid-fifteenth cen-



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tury; in its loggia are frescoes depicting the life of the titular saint by the Cavaliere d'Arpino and other artists.

In the present painting Boccioni attempted to utilize Divisionist brushwork with short strokes that—here and there, however—become longer and more rapid. It was a difficult undertaking for a young artist, both because the subject afforded little scope for imaginative invention and because he had not achieved a sufficient level of technical skill.

The signature indicates that the picture was probably painted, or at least finished, in Padua, where Boccioni's mother and sister were living. They would remain there until late 1907 or sometime between the end of 1907 and early 1908, when they followed Umberto to Milan where he had recently taken up residence.

In 1905 the present picture was submitted to the Salone dei Rifiutati, an exhibition organized by a group of dissident artists whose works had been rejected by the jury of the Amatori e Cultori exhibition. Of the five or six paintings Boccioni submitted to the latter exhibition, only one was selected, a self-portrait (no. 4). Boccioni therefore joined other artists in showing their rejected works in the lobby of the Teatro Nazionale. On that occasion, Boccioni's works caught the attention of Primo Levi, a noted art historian, who wrote in the Rome daily *La Tribuna* of March 12, 1905: "By Boccioni, who expresses himself with an audacity that is not always well balanced, there are numerous studies which in a large exhibition would slip by unnoticed, but here much more easily attract the eye of the seasoned observer."

This painting belongs to the bequest of the Chiattone family to the Museo Civico di Belle Arti, Lugano.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1905b; Milan 1916–17, no. 86 (*Interno di un chiostro*); Milan 1960, no. 2; Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 21; Verona 1985–86, no. 8

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 33 (*Interno di un chiostro*); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 1 (*Chiostro nel Veneto*); Ballo 1964, no. 3; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 182, no. 2206; Bruno 1969, no. 3; Damigella 1972, p. XLVII; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 31

4. *Self-Portrait*
Autoritratto 1905

Oil on canvas
20¼ × 27 in. (51.4 × 68.6 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Assigned to the year 1907 by various writers, notably Ballo and Bruno, the painting was given its proper date of 1905 in *Futurism and the International Avant-Garde*, the catalogue of the exhibition organized by Anne d'Harnoncourt at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1980–81. The portrait was reproduced in the May–June 1905 issue of the magazine *L'Italia industriale e artistica*, and Boccioni had had it printed on adhesive paper with the letterhead of the LXVII Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti, the Amatori e Cultori, held in Rome in 1905.

Severini is the most informative firsthand witness for the Roman period, when the two young artists were jointly seeking their individual artistic identities. In his *Vita di un pittore* Severini tells of the difficulties both artists had at the Amatori e Cultori exhibition: "Even though Balla was part of the selection committee, I was rejected in toto. I had presented six or seven works including a large autumn landscape, *Come le foglie* [*Like the Leaves*]. Boccioni had submitted five or six works to the jury, and of these the only one accepted was a self-portrait which was the least inter-



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esting of the lot. I should say that both Boccioni and I, instinctively and logically working out for ourselves Impressionist vision and theory (with a daring and violent way of working), were without realizing it drawing close to the expression of Cézanne. Only Balla could understand that attitude and stand up for it, which he did. But he did not succeed in winning the point. Along with other painters not selected by the jury, we went ahead and organized the first exhibition of the *rifiutati* in the lobby of the Teatro Nazionale, which no longer exists."

The *Self-Portrait* mentioned by Severini is the present one (now Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York, which acquired it from the artist's family). Boccioni must have valued this work highly if he never disposed of it during his lifetime. Severini's remark about the change in their painting style beginning in 1904 is well confirmed in this work. By that date the volumetric feeling in Boccioni's work had already become progressively strengthened with respect to tonality, which was now relegated to a secondary role. The quest for a new dimensionality is nonetheless

still achieved by means of color, which becomes interwoven like the threads of a coarse canvas.

In the present painting Boccioni seems to have been seeking a more rapid technique, something less minutely detailed which dispensed with painstaking analysis of reality. The face is not supported by a descriptive background, and nothing underlines its form. The large leaves of a tree at the left impel the figure to the foreground and accentuate its flesh-and-blood solidity. In two other portraits of this period, one of an elderly man and the other of the artist's aunt, Boccioni made much of the structure of the face, as here, hollowing out deep zones of shadow and markedly brightening other areas with strong slashes of light. He would soon abandon this new style of painting, and only in his last works, those of 1916, would he again experiment with this technique of broad constructive brushwork, which Severini called "Cézannian."

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1905a; New York 1961, no. 21; New York 1973–74, no. 26 (ca. 1908); Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 15

LITERATURE: Italia industriale 1905, p. 23; Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 35 (Collection Callegari-Boccioni); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 55 (34 × 71 cm.); Ballo 1964, no. 22 (34 × 71 cm., 1907); Bruno 1969, no. 16a (1907); Damigella 1972, p. XLVII; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 40

5. *La Signora Virginia* 1905

Oil on canvas
55⅛ × 45½ in. (140 × 115.5 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni, Roma giugno 1905
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

Between 1899 and 1901, his first years in Rome, Boccioni lived with his father in the home of his paternal aunt, a relative of Signora Virginia Procida. Signora Procida's son-in-law, Duilio Cambellotti, was six years older than Boccioni. Chiefly interested in the decorative arts, Cambellotti was an illustrator of considerable elegance; he was also a painter and sculptor and later a set designer. He immediately took to the young Boccioni, inviting him to his home and introducing him to other artists active in Rome. Years later, in testimony to his gratitude and friendship, Boccioni would give his *Pittura, scultura futuriste* to Cambellotti with the inscription: "To the dear and great artist, to the friend who supported my first steps with constant friendship." Boccioni never forgot the help given him in his lonely, difficult youth and always retained a great affection for Rome.

When he left for Paris in April 1906, Boccioni stored some of his belongings with relatives and friends in Rome. The present painting was entrusted to Signora Virginia or to Boccioni's good friend Mario Sironi. In October 1907 he wrote to Severini from Milan: "See if you can arrange for my things to be sent to me (payment on delivery). . . . Sironi will do what he can with Signora Virginia." He invited Severini to visit him in Milan—a city "full of masterpieces," he said, among them Leonardo's *Last Supper* and "a Pietà by G. Bellini, miraculous!"—and added: "You will see nothing of mine. Everything I have done has been either destroyed, given away, or sold. Unfortunately, the latter case is rare. This is because of my movement from city to city. I want to settle down once and for all and have all my things from Rome. Busy yourself with this for a moment and see to it that they send me my books and canvases. These will help me to work here."

Boccioni studied with Giacomo Balla in Rome, and the older artist's influence is evident in the present painting. After using a more volumetric painting style, Boccioni returned to his teacher's approach. He abandoned squared-off volumes and almost-distorted



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faces, adopting odd perspectives and lighting effects, oblique brushwork, and overlapping colors to emphasize pictorial depth.

Balla's teaching is especially evident in the photographic angle of the image, which is viewed from below, and in the foreshortening of the bedroom at the left. The light in the picture comes from the bedroom and from an unseen source in front of the sitter. Signora Virginia emerges from the sharp contrast between bright light and darkness as a massive black figure.

As early as 1901, in his tempera and pastel *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, Balla experimented with foreshortening large dimensions to make his mother's face appear as if modeled by light. He continued to explore this concept for several years, and it became the basis of the theory he taught the young Severini, Boccioni, and Sironi. In 1904 Balla portrayed his wife, Elisa, in a doorway with a play of almost monochromatic oppositions in which light and shadow shape the figure's contours. The following year he was still at work on his group of four canvases about aspects of human life, in particular *The Madwoman*, a painting not only of pronounced pious feeling but also of disturbing desperation, heightened by the violence of its color. By that date, however, Boccioni had not yet brightened his palette; he still relied on a limited number of tones, while placing great emphasis on the harsh drama achieved by unusual perspectives.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1906, no. 493; Milan 1909, no. 143 (*Ritratto della signora Virginia*); Milan 1916–17, no. 17; Milan 1934, no. 279; Venice 1960; Milan 1973–74, no. 18; London 1979–80, no. 360; Milan 1982–83, no. 1; Verona 1985–86, no. 17

LITERATURE: Sarfatti 1916, p. 12; Emporium 1917, p. 77; Costantini 1934, p. 191 (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome); Nicodemi and Bezzola 1935, no. 217; Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 30; Ballo 1960, no. 40; Ballo 1964, no. 5; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 182, no. 2207; Bruno 1969, no. 4; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, p. 13, no. 15; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 43

6. *Mother and Child*
Madre e figlio 1905–1906

Pastel on cardboard
38×28 in. (96.5×71 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Umberto Boccioni
Private collection. Courtesy Galleria dello Scudo, Verona

This previously unpublished pastel can be dated, for stylistic reasons, to 1905–1906. It is possible that it was completed by Boccioni before his departure from Rome in the spring of 1906; the signature at the bottom right is, however, quite similar to that located in the same position in a pastel of his mother dated December 1906, though here it looks faded and perhaps lightly retouched.

The technique, while rapid and sketchy, demonstrates considerable analytical ability. An intense effort lies behind this image, whose style and palette bring to mind *The Old Woman* (no. 7). Here the composition is simpler; the perspective is less daring than in other works of this period, but the color and light are vibrant, remarkable for their sensitivity. The gleaming white of the tablecloth reflects on the clothing and faces, creating an expressive immediacy that approaches the instantaneity of a photograph. The interior is suggested through Divisionist pastel strokes. The hatching of the color becomes more rapid in some parts, and the form is barely suggested in places where the artist wants to create a sense of movement and vitality, as in the child's



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hands. The dominant colors, except of course for black and white, are yellow and green, which are softened in some areas by cobalt blue shading.

In this work Boccioni seems to allude to future developments in his art; the oblique and ragged technique foreshadows the luminous bands in *Modern Idol* (no. 55A). The Divisionism with which the artist experiments brings the whole composition toward a dynamic resolution, surmounting the static, French-derived Pointillism. This work also shows an interest in Klimt's linear style and in the Viennese Sezession.

UNPUBLISHED

7. *The Old Woman*
Nonna 1905–1906

Pastel on paper
48 7/8 × 31 1/8 in. (124 × 79 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni, Roma 905–06
Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia, Venice

This pastel belongs to the group of works executed by Boccioni during his years in Rome. Finished in the winter of 1905–1906, a few months before he left the city, the work shows the influence of Giacomo Balla. Balla's philosophy is evident even in the choice of subject. The older master liked to portray subjects denigrated or ignored by society. Describing himself in the third person, the artist wrote: "His friends were the people whom everyone despises and finds repugnant: madmen, beggars, the sick, those rejected by society."

This portrait of an old woman warming her hands at a small copper brazier is imbued with the humanitarian socialism Boccioni had absorbed from his reading. As Severini later wrote: "The relationship between the artist and society didn't interest us much; nevertheless the general Marxist principle, according to which 'man is the product of his environment,' drove us, if not to become formally interested in politics, at least to accept its influence, in the socialist and communist forms that were then beginning to be taken seriously. One should keep in mind that we were living in a period of social upheaval, of demands and class struggle, of strikes put down with violence; and we fully experienced all of this, with the enthusiasm of youth, the desire for 'social justice,' and the deep emotional sympathy for the oppressed and indignation toward the rulers so characteristic of young people."

In this work Boccioni fully exploited the possibilities of pastel. The white highlights and the oblique stroke so typical of Degas, emphasize the hands and the face as the focal points of the composition. These elements then diffuse the light to the rest of the work.

The work, along with *La Signora Virginia* (no. 5), was exhibited in Rome in 1906 at the Società degli Amatori e Cultori. The same vertical thrust, exaggerated by the view from below, is used in both pictures.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1906, no. 509; Milan 1910; Venice 1910, no. 22; Milan 1916–17, no. 85; Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 1 (*Ritratto della nonna*); Verona 1959 (*Vecchia con lo scaldino*); Milan 1973–74, no. 19; Milan 1982–83, no. 2; Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 29; Verona 1985–86, no. 19

LITERATURE: Adriatico 1910a; Gazzettino 1910; Adriatico 1910d; Gazzetta di Venezia 1910b; Difesa 1910d; Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 35; Taylor 1961b, no. 2; De Grada 1962, no. 3 (*Ritratto della nonna*); Ballo 1964, no. 6; Perocco 1965, p. 91 (*Ritratto della nonna*); Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 182, no. 2211; Bruno 1969, no. 6; Perocco 1972, p. 91 (*Ritratto della nonna*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 51; Ballo 1984, no. 25 (ill.)



7



8. *Sophie Popoff*
Ritratto di Sophie Popoff 1906

Oil on canvas
78¾ × 39⅜ in. (200 × 100 cm.)
Inscribed left center: unfinished (in Russian)
Private collection. Courtesy Ellen Melas Kyriazi

This portrait was painted during Boccioni's visit to Russia in the late summer and fall of 1906. He left Paris on August 27, and after a week's train journey with stopovers in Cologne, Berlin, and Warsaw, he reached Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd) where he stayed for about a month. There he was the guest of Count Popoff and his family, Russian aristocrats who were probably acquaintances of Augusta Petrovna Berdnicoff and her husband, the friends who had asked him to join them for a visit to Russia. Succeeding in raising the money for the trip, Boccioni expressed his enthusiasm in a letter to his mother and sister (August 25, 1906): "I will be able to put out the ninety lire needed for the journey without beating around the bush and with no difficulty and will arrive decently fitted out!!!! You ask me if these people think well of me? Do you believe that they would take me there if that were not the case? Naturally I will be a guest in their house, or else how could I manage? Meanwhile the portraits will get done, but I have no worries about that. Doesn't it strike you as a stroke of luck?"

As the letter indicates, Boccioni planned to pay his expenses by painting portraits, an activity which, given the number he produced in his early career, was an unfailing resource whenever penury threatened.

It was probably in appreciation of the Popoffs' hospitality that Boccioni painted this portrait, which is of great importance in reconstructing his artistic development. Few documents survive from his Russian sojourn—scarcely more than this canvas and another one that has been recently discovered, a few photographs, and a letter written to his father from Padua after his return, in which he briefly described his journey.

Before leaving Paris, Boccioni cautioned his mother to take care of the photographs she would receive "because I will send many from Russia and want to make an album of them" (letter, August 25, 1906).

In 1912 the countess visited her daughter in France and brought her this portrait; it remained in the family until recently. Compared with the canvases Boccioni had produced in Paris, in which he had begun to use violent colors in strident and bold combinations, this image is notably more studied and carefully worked out. Iconographically close to the Roman works and to the vertically composed portraits of Signora Virginia (no. 5) and of an old woman (no. 7), this work makes use of much less dense and more liquid paint whose transparency is achieved by successive glazings of color. Small touches of varicolored hues recall the Divisionist technique, applied sensitively, however, rather than scientifically. In the lower zone the brushstrokes become longer to model the sitter's body. This portion of the picture demonstrates a dynamic feeling for form—the paint is manipulated to accentuate the movement that begins in the woman's hands.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1982–83, no. 3; Verona 1985–86, no. 24

LITERATURE: Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 241



9

9. *The Mother*
La madre 1906

Pastel on paper
28⅜ × 20½ in. (72 × 52 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Umberto Boccioni, Padova 1906 Dicembre
Collection Antonio Catanese, Milan

This portrait in pastel of the artist's mother was executed by Boccioni a few days after his return from Russia. This work shows a deeper awareness of technique, a greater compositional precision, and a more decisive and confident use of the pastel medium than do his earlier efforts. In early January Boccioni began to write his thoughts in a notebook, a practice he would continue for several months. "I've been doing enough work these days but am still searching for a conscientious expressive skill, and nothing more than skill. Here too I'm weak," he wrote on March 18, 1907, revealing his difficulty in finding a new means of artistic expression. Balla's influence is still evident in this work, despite Boccioni's attempts to separate himself from his teachings: "Certainly Balla is losing his sway over me, but I'm far from being completely free of him" (diary, March 28, 1907).

In this pastel the depiction of details is important in the definition of the whole; this approach emerged from Boccioni's experiments, and he referred to it in his writings of this period: "My pictures must have . . . that religious observation of details, that marvelous union of the true and the ideal, that calm glorification that ought to penetrate all the way from a gentle and grandiose whole to the subtle intimacy of the humblest detail" (diary, March 30, 1907).

EXHIBITION: Verona 1985–86, no. 25

LITERATURE: Severini 1933, p. 353 (*Ritratto della madre*); Ballo 1964, no. 12; Archivi del Divisionismo, 1968, p. 182, no. 2210; Bruno 1969, no. 9; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 244

10. *Virgilio Brocchi* 1907

Oil on canvas
15⅜ × 23 in. (39.2 × 58.5 cm.)
Private collection. Courtesy Galleria Cafiso, Milan

Born in 1876 in Rieti of a Venetian family, Brocchi lived chiefly in Milan. Boccioni may have read his *Fascino* (1902) and *Le aquile* (1906) in which a vaguely socialist ideology is expressed in a rather moralizing and rhetorical style. Brocchi presented his settings with rare photographic precision, and his narratives have an idealistic and romantic air.

While Brocchi declared that art should express itself in a "harmonious synthesis of reality and idealization," Boccioni, around 1906-1907, on his return from his trips to France and Russia, wrote about the difficulty of finding a meeting point between these two entities. It is not known when Boccioni met Brocchi, but based on stylistic comparisons, this portrait can be dated to 1907 with confidence. The figure of the writer is pushed forward and seems to lean toward the spectator. Dense brown brushstrokes mingle at the horizon with other resonant notes in long streaks that seem to represent an extended seashore and the reflections of a sunset; the brief strip of sky is enlivened by large motifs with floral decorations. A highlight that strikes the head emphasizes the melancholy expression of the face, executed with a rapid, heavily loaded brush. A few touches of color—ranging from pink to yellow mixed with white—highlight the complexion, whose shadows are indicated by an olive green.



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In this painting Boccioni is increasingly distancing himself from the naturalism he learned during his years in Rome; here he tries to render the atmosphere of the setting and the sensibility of the sitter with a solidity that is ignited and alive, that vibrates in rapid explosive bursts.

Reporting the judgment of his lawyer-friend Emilio Piccoli in his diary (August 15, 1907) Boccioni was most likely referring to this painting: "I feel that he esteems me highly, and every one of his words makes me ashamed of my insignificance. He has confessed to me that when he saw me in Padua in front of Brocchi's picture he thought of me as deluded and unfortunate because of my sad silence in the presence of my own work. And it's true, I can pretend, joke, exaggerate about anything, but when it comes to a work of mine, that is to say a prayer of mine to the Great Mother, I feel small, low, wretched, and I accept all attacks as deserved. Do I deserve them? Am I sincere? Can I say that I've never left a work with the awareness of having done everything I could?"

During these months Boccioni was assailed by constant doubt—his anxiety and deep dissatisfaction induced him to undertake different stylistic approaches. This portrait dates from this time of experiment and study, and if it seems immature, it nevertheless marks an important transition in Boccioni's career.

LITERATURE: Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 245



11

11. *Adriana Bisi Fabbri*
Ritratto della pittrice Adriana Bisi Fabbri 1907

Oil on canvas
20½ × 37⅜ in. (52 × 95 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Boccioni U. / Padova 5 III 907
Private collection

Thanks to Boccioni's efforts, his cousin Adriana Bisi Fabbri, also a painter, participated in the Arte Libera exhibition of 1911 in Milan, where the Futurists showed together for the first time. On the eve of the opening, after having seen her works in the room adjoining that of the Futurists, he wrote to Fabbri: "Dear friend, A thousand excuses for not writing earlier. . . . Your works arrived with two panes of glass broken. . . . Immediately after your wall comes the Futurist room. . . . Of your works I prefer the *Peahen* and the *Lizard*. To give you my judgment on them is not easy. It seems to me that the literary idea may prevail over the pictorial idea."

In 1907 Adriana Bisi Fabbri had married the journalist Giannetto Bisi, who would later take a lively interest in Boccioni's sculpture and write an article about it in 1913 on the occasion of its exhibition in Giuseppe Spro-

vieri's Galleria Futurista in Rome. On June 15, 1908, Boccioni wrote in his diary: "Signor Giannetto Bisi, the husband of Signora Adriana Fabbri, has come to Milan. . . . He wished to talk with me and be with me, to show me that he has nothing against me and that he was mistaken in treating me coldly in Padua. He came to meet me at Chiattone's and we talked or, better, I talked a lot, a little (indeed, a lot) because I am a natural gabber and as soon as I meet a person who is even slightly intellectual, I blab everything I've been ruminating over for months; a little too because I was weak enough to want to demonstrate that, whatever the subject, I was not a bloody fool. It is a weakness whose roots I cannot discover but which I deplore, while at the same time being certain that I will succumb to it again tomorrow. In fact, speaking about talking a lot or a little, he said to me that now he knows me better than I know him. Is that so? Am I an imbecile? Do I do any harm? Yet I feel that I will not change. I take sensuous pleasure in fine talk and love to construct my thoughts in fine paragraphs (and I try to speak well and clearly), and I love to hear my own voice."

The present work is a synthesis of the portraits Boccioni had painted to date, both in the way the shadows are composed and in the relationship between the foreground figure and the background. Boccioni maintains an equilibrium among the lines of the composition, and he succeeds in creating a harmony between the dynamic forces of landscape and sitter. This complex work shows a maturing, a meditation on his experiences in France and Russia.

Boccioni was determined to give visible form to ephemeral emotions and events, writing in his diary: "I saw a pigeon in flight, and as always I was struck by the idea that in modern art the poetry I would call *of the instant* has been forgotten. There are few modern pictures that express in a modern way (in the most absolute sense) the fall of a leaf, the flight of a bird, the intimacy of a little corner imbued with life, the harmony of a tiny cloud passing over the shape of things, etc., and all those particular nuances of the great universal whole that move one in pictures of the past. *It seems to me* that people may think that all this detracts from the skill and the show of skill that they want to display in paintings. Segantini was right to tell us to return to the humble daisy in the meadow and drop all those airs of skillful self-important artists" (March 30, 1907).

Some of Boccioni's early studies, datable around 1902, were done after Giovanni Segantini (1858–99), whose work he very much admired. Boccioni, however, now aspired to a different kind of painting, something far more modern and less analytical. The tension between his feeling for realism and his aspiration toward expressing the absolute was deepening, and it would pervade his work until his death.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1933, no. 10 (*Ritratto di donna*); Reggio Calabria 1966, no. 6; Milan 1970, no. 117 (*Ritratto della pittrice A. Bisi Fabbri / Figura femminile in giardino / Donna in giardino*); Milan 1973–74, no. 23; Milan 1980, p. 22; Verona 1985–86, no. 30

LITERATURE: Ballo 1960, pp. 75, 98; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, p. 257, no. 92 (*Figura in giardino*, signed bottom right: "Boccioni Padova 5. VIII. 909"); De Grada 1962, no. 29 (*Donna in giardino*, signed bottom right: "Boccioni U. Padova 5 [aprile] 1909"); Ballo 1964, no. 15 (signed bottom right: "Boccioni Padova 5 VII"); Calvesi 1967, p. 28; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 183; no. 2223; Bruno 1969, no. 12 (signed and dated bottom right: "Boccioni U. Padova 5 VII"); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 249



12

12. *The Sculptor*
Ritratto di scultore 1907

Oil on canvas
40⅛ × 48⅞ in. (102 × 124 cm.)
Italia Assicurazioni, Genoa

This painting demonstrates Boccioni's experimental approach to composition; here he uses the window to achieve a curious framing effect. The background is hatched with a meticulous pointillist technique, while the figure's face is modeled with rapid brushstrokes that give the feeling of a plastic relief, obscured in some areas by overly deep shadows. The three planes of the composition are each observed differently: Rapid, almost violent brushstrokes are used for the foreground figure; small pointillist touches for the middle ground; chro-

matic variations of tone in the sky and in the cupola for the background.

The work presents problems of dating. Ballo (1964) finds in it "a certain relationship to the Impressionist painters observed during the artist's trip to Paris." Calvesi (1953) at first relates this portrait to the artist's stay in the Veneto region, which, before the publication of the notebooks and certain important letters, had been placed between 1905 and 1907; however, he later remarks (1958) on the portrait's stylistic connections with later works —"because of the crystallization of the radiant forms it could instead be closer in time to *Riot in the Galleria* [no. 49]."

The work, quite different from those painted in Padua, has formal elements that could place it between the end of the artist's Paduan stay and his move to Milan. The cupola in the background may be that of San Marco in Venice; the construction to its right would then represent the bell tower, which had not yet been completely rebuilt after its collapse in 1902. On the other hand, the architecture may represent Sant'Antonio in Padua, with its domes and spires. It seems more likely, given the buildings and vegetation that can be glimpsed through the window, that the canvas was executed in Padua and perhaps finished at a later date.

It is difficult to establish a definitive title for this work. In the posthumous exhibition of December 1916–January 1917, organized by Marinetti at the Palazzo Cova in Milan, a painting entitled *Ritratto di scultore* was shown; this is the only known work that could correspond to it. There is no evidence to show that the subject of the portrait is either Brocchi or Ripamonti, as has been often suggested.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 22 (*Ritratto di scultore*); Rome 1953, no. 28 (*Ritratto dello scultore Ripamonti*, 1916); Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 2 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1906); Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 14 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); New York 1961, pp. 24, 142, no. 22 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Milan 1970, no. 118 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi* or *Ritratto dello scultore* or *Ritratto dello scultore Ripamonti*); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 131; Verona 1985–86, no. 29

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 1 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*); Calvesi 1958; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 69 (*Ritratto dello scultore Ripamonti*); De Grada 1962, no. 30 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1906); Ballo 1964, no. 32 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Perocco 1965, p. 93 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 185, no. 2247 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi* or *Ritratto dello scultore Ripamonti* or *Ritratto di scultore*, 1907); Martin 1968, no. 25; Bruno 1969, no. 27 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Birolli 1971, p. 238 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Perocco 1972, p. 93 (*Ritratto dello scultore Brocchi*, 1907); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 250

13. *Boats in Sunlight* *Barche al sole* 1907

Oil on canvas
17¾×24¾ in. (45×63 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom left: U. Boccioni Venezia 907
Private collection

On April 5, 1907, Boccioni wrote in his diary: "I am about to leave for Venice. Padua does not attract me. It is a provincial town; I am appalled to be there with my many struggles. Among all these petty property owners, being poor is a worse crime than elsewhere. . . . No one admires anyone who is still on the way to becoming someone." A few days later he left Padua and on April 20 wrote: "I have been in Venice twelve days now. I am fairly strong in myself. I am living regularly and working. Evenings I go to the Querini Stampalia Library and read."



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The Venetian environment influenced the young artist's choice of subjects. In none of his Venetian paintings, however, did he dwell on the picturesque; he tried instead to capture the subjective sensations aroused by an enchanting site. The concentrated iridescence of luminous color in Venice became dispersed on his canvas into multiple cold, almost frozen gradations. Light, either diffused or reflected in the omnipresent water, acquired a stronger significance for him. For the first time since his early efforts on the banks of the Tiber and the Aniene, Boccioni attempted to capture the ever-changing aspect and effect of water.

On July 12 he noted in his diary: "I have patched up my affairs—actually it was Piccoli who patched them up by selling two marine views for me for fifty lire." It is likely that these paintings were the present one and another of the same dimensions which may have been conceived as a companion piece.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 315 (*Barche al sole a Venezia*); Reggio Calabria 1966, no. 8 (*Barche al sole a Venezia*); Verona 1985–86, no. 32

LITERATURE: Ballo 1964, no. 26 (*Barche al sole a Venezia*); Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 183, no. 2230 (*Barche al sole a Venezia*); Bruno 1969, no. 23 (*Paesaggio a Venezia* [*barche al sole*]); Bellini 1972, p. 25; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 254

14. *The Grand Canal in Venice*
Il Canal Grande a Venezia 1907

Oil on canvas
26¾ × 26¾ in. (68 × 68 cm.)
Signed and dated lower right: U. Boccioni Venezia 5–907
Courtesy Galleria dello Scudo, Verona

Boccioni lived in Venice from April to August 1907, growing more dissatisfied each day—"I dream of countries that are complete, modern, energetic, remote from all this harping on the antique that crushes one. Would Milan be better for me? Paris? America? Scandinavia?" (diary, July 5, 1907). "I continue not to work. I am not discouraged about my ability but about the pecuniary issues that will improve only when I prostitute myself in the most ignoble manner. People continue to speak badly of Milan to me. There is a popular aversion for the only Italian city that is up to something. I am tired. I am lacking in everything, morally and materially. And I think that in Milan life will be worse" (diary, July 12, 1907).

Boccioni enrolled in the Istituto di Belle Arti in Venice on May 21, and on his enrollment certificate it was noted that he had studied at the Scuola del Nudo in Rome and was living in calle della Fava 5601 in the parish of San Salvatore. The present painting depicts the stretch between the Rialto Bridge and the Fondaco dei Tedeschi where the canal bends toward the Fabbriche Vecchie, a location very close to where Boccioni was living. Motifs that would reappear in his later work are already in evidence—the suggestion of a balcony that cuts across the canvas, giving a sense of direction; the foreshortening generated by the oblique perspective. The bouquet of flowers at the lower right is not an arbitrary decorative touch but is used to emphasize the innovative viewpoint. The device of a view through a window, which he used in *The Sculptor* (no. 12), was to remain one of the artist's most frequently repeated motifs well into his mature years, to be used with diverse compositions and foreshortenings.

This painting may have been inspired by a Venetian scene by Paul Signac shown in the French hall at the seventh Venice Biennale, which was held during Boccioni's stay in the city. However, when recording his visits to the international exhibition, he rarely mentioned foreign artists: "I am at the exhibition and as always find very little here except for an occasional major artist. I find the foreigners even more messy, slovenly, vulgar in technique, though they may be truly noble in inspiration, if and when there is any. On the other hand, we put on display our civil, intellectual, and moral poverty with bastard techniques yet with ways of seeing that are always clear, clean, and joyous, which reveal the Latinity beneath our centuries-old misery" (diary, July 12, 1907).

EXHIBITIONS: Venice 1948, no. 23; Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 3; Verona 1959; Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 135; Verona 1985–86, no. 35

LITERATURE: De Grada 1962, pl. 2; Ballo 1964, no. 28; Perocco 1965, cover, p. 96; Munari 1967, p. 35; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 183, no. 2233; Bruno 1969, no. 22; Perocco 1972, cover, p. 96; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 257



14

15A. *Gisella* 1907

Pastel on paper
$38\frac{5}{8} \times 26\frac{3}{4}$ in. (98 × 68 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom left: U. Boccioni 907; inscription: Gisella
Cassa di Risparmio di Calabria e di Lucania, Cosenza

B. *Gisella* 1907

Drypoint
$9\frac{5}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$ in. (24.4 × 33.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

The same subject exists in three versions: an oil, a pastel, and a drypoint. The most successful is the pastel, which is superior in spatial construction and handling of light. The bust-length oil (private collection) has a certain sluggish quality; there are no original elements that set it apart from Boccioni's other Venetian works. In the present pastel the half-length figure occupies most of the picture; from the empty space at the left an effect of radiation is generated. This light emphasizes the woman's features, as does the dark background, which is covered with oblique, thread-like strokes. Balla's influence is seen in the photographic cropping of the image and in the play of light, almost monochromatic in its subtle and very slight color variations. The rapidity of the strokes recalls Toulouse-Lautrec.

The pastel was exhibited in 1910 in Venice at the Mostra d'Estate in the Palazzo Pesaro, where Boccioni had been invited to hold a one-man show. The *Gazzetta di Venezia* noted that "the image of the streetwalker Gisella, strongly depicted in her vulgarity, seems incomparably audacious, perhaps because it shows no awareness of all the discussion about de Goncourt's *Fille Elisa* many years ago." In the *Corriere della Sera*, the reviewer wrote: "One was expecting pictorial acrobatics, ideological eccentricity, in short a bit of revolution; but instead there was nothing, unless you want to call *Gisella*, a large pastel showing a prostitute calmly seated on a divan, Futurist." The critic Giulio Pagliano of *L'Adriatico* was no more polite. In fact, none of these writers realized that the pastel had been done in 1907, three years before Boccioni met Marinetti and embarked on the Futurist adventure.

The work was sold shortly afterward to the painter Mario Volpi. Toward the end of July Boccioni wrote to Nino Barbantini, director of the Museo d'Arte Moderna and secretary of the Mostre Bevilacqua La Masa: "I agree with you in accepting the conditions of Signor Volpi, whom I do not know personally, but please give him my thanks." In another letter to Barbantini, which can be dated early August, Boccioni emphasized his eagerness to sell the pastel: "I'm amazed not to have received any answer to my special-delivery letter to you about the sale of *Gisella* to Signor Volpi. I told you to accept 200 lire and to thank him." The pastel was sold immediately thereafter, as shown by the notice published in the newspaper *L'Adriatico* on August 17: "Mario Volpi has purchased the pastel *Gisella*, one of the most important items in the Umberto Boccioni exhibition."

In Venice Boccioni applied himself to the technique of engraving. In April 1907 he had noted in his diary a method for using drypoint and on July 26 wrote: "A drypoint on which I set great store did not come out in the printing. I need a press. . . . I've started another drypoint, a nude youth on the starting line for a race. It's all right but awfully weak." The engraving *Gisella*, executed in these months, was taken from the pastel.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 15A—Venice 1910, no. 26; Milan 1953, no. 284; Ivrea 1963, p. 8; Cortina d'Ampezzo 1971–72, pl. 2; Verona 1985–86, no. 41

LITERATURE: No. 15A—Adriatico 1910a; Gazzetta di Venezia 1910d; Corriere della Sera 1910c; Adriatico 1910c; Difesa 1910c; Ballo 1964, no. 18; Perocco 1965, p. 94; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 184, no. 2234; Bruno 1969, no. 15b; Bellini 1972, p. 19; Perocco 1972, p. 94; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 264

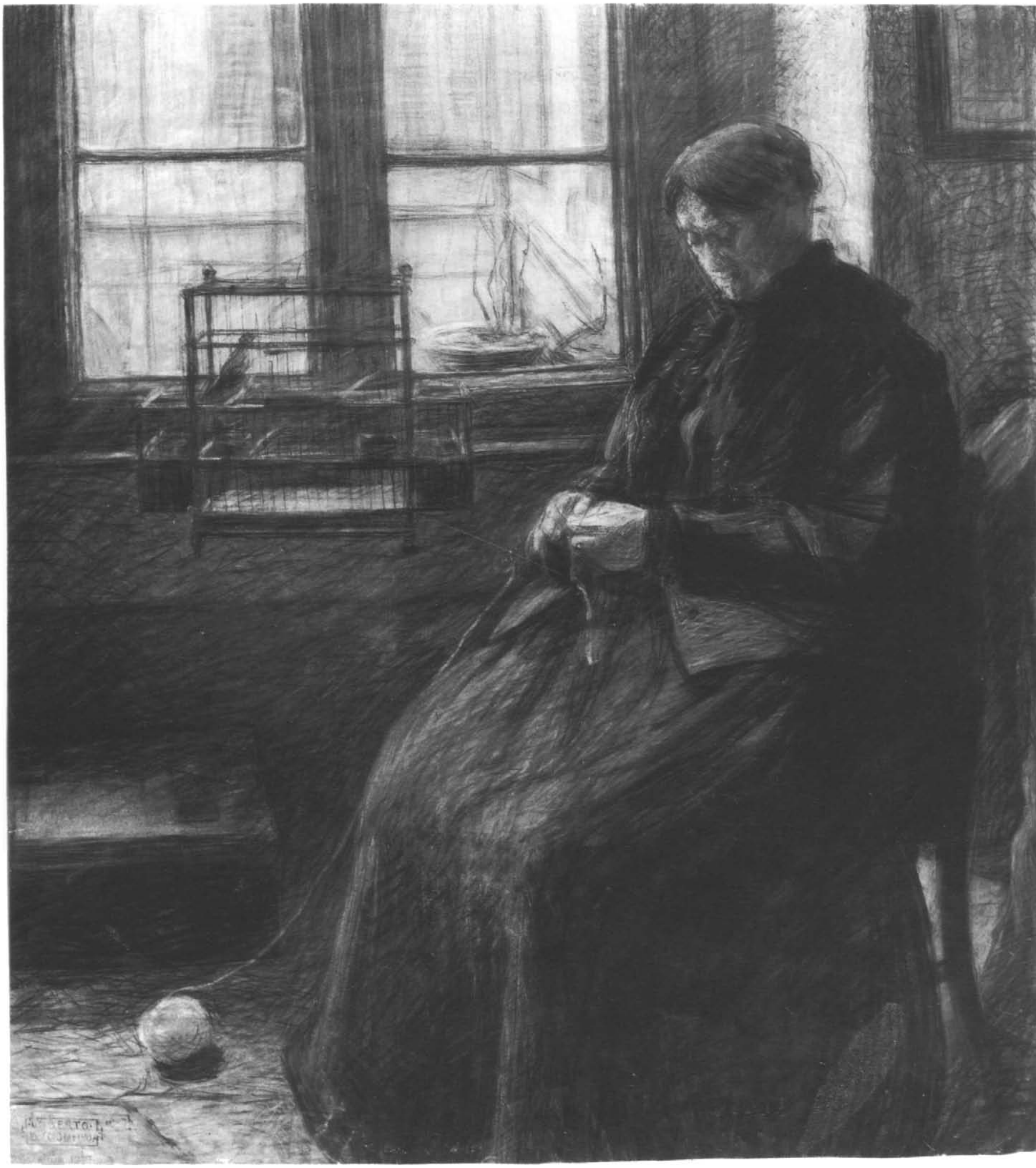
No. 15B—Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 3; Taylor 1961b, no. 306 (1909–10); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 417; De Grada 1962, no. 7; Ballo 1964, no. 20, p. 111; Bruno 1969, no. 15c; Bellini 1972, no. 1; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 265



15A



15B



16A

16A. *Maria Sacchi*
La Signora Sacchi 1907

Pastel on paper
30⅜ × 26¾ in. (77 × 68 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom left: Umberto Boccioni 1907
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

B. *Maria Sacchi Reading*
La Signora Sacchi 1907

Drypoint
19 × 12⅝ in. (48.3 × 32.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni; dated bottom right (in reverse): Milano 907
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

"I went to Paris to cure and heal myself. I am going to Milan with the intention of winning and conquering it." Thus wrote Boccioni in his diary on May 29, 1907, although he did not leave Venice until mid-August.

During his first months in Milan he continued to show the influence of Balla, though he began to move beyond his teacher by seeking out more unusual photographic viewpoints and studying the dramatic possibilities of light.



16B

The drawing of Signora Sacchi is still within the sphere of Boccioni's Roman works; it is similar in format to the portrait of Signora Virginia (no. 5), and, above all, to the *The Old Woman* (no. 7). In this pastel, however, he is more interested in the relationship between indoors and outdoors, in the coloristic potential of light, and in the modeling of a figure through chiaroscuro and tonal contrasts.

A large part of the composition is occupied by a window, through which a slanting light is diffused, picking out details not only of the figure—notably the side of the face and the hands—but also of the domestic setting, like the window frame, the low bench, the back of the chair, the withered plant in the window box, and the bird cage hanging from the window latch.

Maria Sacchi was Boccioni's neighbor in Milan, and toward the end of his first year there the artist portrayed her in various poses. In the present drypoint—with a Renaissance-style inscription at the top right—the artist drew the old woman's face with minute care, fully exploiting the technical possibilities of the medium. The spatial setting is defined by a harsh and emphatic linearity.

LITERATURE: No. 16A—Taylor 1961b, no. 4; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 15 (*Interno*); Ballo 1964, no. 43; Bruno 1969, no. 30a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 271

17. *Seated Woman (Artist's Mother)*
Donna seduta 1907

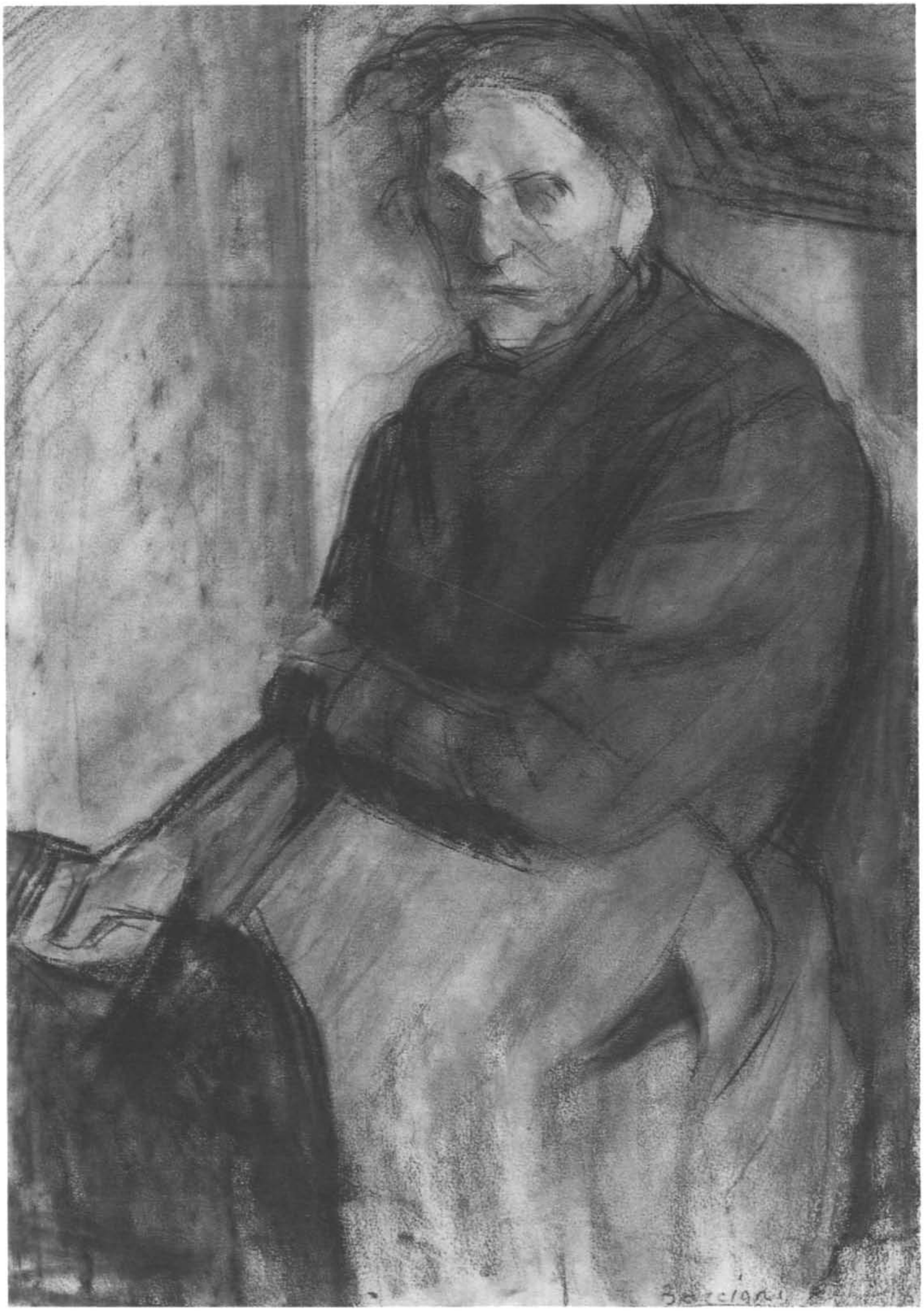
Pastel on paper
18⅞ × 14⅛ in. (48 × 36 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

Although undated, this pastel is stylistically close to works Boccioni produced in late 1907. The treatment is secure and rapid, and the artist's sensibility is influenced by Expressionist models. While not renouncing the poses he had favored since 1905—the seated woman, foreshortened and turned so as to occupy only part of the space—Boccioni here dispensed with the attention to details stressed by Balla's teaching.

In technique this portrait is much like *Two Old Women Seated* (*Due vecchie sedute;* private collection, Milan), a pastel dated 1907, in which the faces are modeled, indeed hollowed out, with strokes charged with energy and toughness. Here too the marked contrast between light and shadow gives the woman an expression at once embittered and solid. The forms of her body are sculptural, and the emphasis on her hand gives the composition a dynamic synthesis.

Bruno (1969) conjectures that this pastel may be another portrait of Signora Sacchi (no. 16).

LITERATURE: Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 63; Ballo 1964, no. 47; Bruno 1969, no. 33; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 278



17

18. *Study for "Homage to Mother"* *Studio per Veneriamo la madre* 1907–1908

Pencil on paper
15⅜ × 22¾ in. (39.1 × 57.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Umberto Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

In the fall of 1907 Boccioni spent some days in Munich with the thought of visiting Saint Petersburg again—a project that came to naught because of the vagueness and "changes of mind" of the Russian woman he was to accompany. After visiting in Paris briefly in early October to see the exhibition of the Italian Divisionists, he returned to Milan burdened with doubts and indecision: "I have written nothing. I am not energetic when it comes to myself. I cannot bring myself to do thousands of things, and I am often tired. Much hinges on the total lack of funds for beginning serious works. . . . As soon as I can, I will buy a little of everything in order to get to work. I have sketched out the idea for a triptych, *Homage to Mother.* I would have begun it already, but I lack the funds. The greatest difficulty *after that* is to infuse something true into the form of the idea without falling into vacuousness and superficiality. This is the picture: In the side panels, the two children. One is studying and exploring science; through the window there is a glimpse of modern life. The other one works by lamplight; through the window is seen a cloudy evening sky, and the moon shines in. In the middle panel is the weary mother flanked by two figures symbolizing the children's love, the two spirits of adoration. One is gentle, feminine, and kisses the mother's hand with devotion; the other, prouder, in a pose of stern indignation and manly defense. Background: sunset, church, and ruins. This is it in a few words, badly expressed. But I had better add that all of it is extremely simple, extremely carefully composed, extremely meticulous. Will I really execute it?" (diary, October 17, 1907).

Boccioni's concept is embodied in this drawing, which contains all the elements he described. This composition, with its division into three compartments, was repeated in a small oil painting on panel (private collection), which seems to have been intended as the working sketch for the definitive picture. He appears, however, to have gone no further; the catalogue for the posthumous exhibition of 1916–17 included the present work, described as the "sketch for the unexecuted triptych *Homage to Mother.*" To judge by the measurements written at the bottom of the drawing (85 centimeters for the wings and 135 for the central panel [33½ and 53⅛ inches, respectively]), the artist planned a large and ambitious work. The small oil painting is executed with broad and swift brushwork and differs in some respects from the drawing. The settings for the three personages are rather different, and the overall size of the side panels has been reduced.

The triptych format recurs often in Boccioni's works. The first sketches from his Roman period include rough drawings for a painting divided into three parts. As late as 1911, when he painted the celebrated trilogy *States of Mind* (no. 56), Boccioni defined the work as a triptych, even though the three canvases are physically independent.

It is likely that Boccioni drew inspiration for *Homage to Mother* from paintings he had recently seen: "The exhibition of the Divisionists in Paris, extremely interesting. Marvelous canvases by Segantini, very daring ones by Previati, worthy enough ones by Fornara and others. They have given me the decisive push. Balla is over and done with" (diary, October 17, 1907). There were in fact triptychs among the works exhibited by those artists; in any event, Boccioni appears to have been struck by the Divisionists' pictorial sensitivity and by their rapport with nature and their ideals of art, and he seems to have decided to follow their lead.

EXHIBITION: Milan 1916–17, no. 36 (*Studio per il trittico in nero Veneriamo la madre*)

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 15; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 114; Bruno 1969 (in margin at no. 76); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 291



18



19

19. *La Signora Massimino* 1908

Oil on canvas
48⅜ × 59½ in. (123 × 151 cm.)
Signed top right: U. Boccioni
Collection Loris Fontana, Milan

The history of this painting is recounted by Boccioni in his diary, where he describes the various stages of the work and the crises he underwent in the months when the painting was taking form. In one of the final phases Boccioni states his dissatisfaction with the result, especially from the standpoint of form.

On December 21, 1907, he wrote: "Met Signor Massimino and his wife; nice. Doing portrait of both 1.25 × 1.50. They pay costs." On Christmas Eve, Boccioni began work on one of the paintings: "I've started the portrait of Signora Massimino. I feel all around me a slight distrust about my ability in spite of all the lady's goodness, patience, and politeness. I'm doing the best I can." On January 8, 1908, he noted: "Snow. I've started coloring the portrait of Signora Massimino. . . . I'm feeling much calmer as we go along but very far from the strong execution I dream of." On February 13, after a period of uncertainty and anxiety, Boccioni wrote: "Tomorrow I think I'll work. Next week I'll get back to Signora Massimino's portrait. Nice lady. It's odd that with her I enjoy being close to a young person. The portrait will turn out all right, but I must confess that never have I been more persevering in doing a work and never have I found myself more disoriented than with this one. Why? Signor Massimino is courteous and has a robust frankness that is likable. But as always I keep waiting from one day to the next for the vulgar note that will make me disgusted with it all. He is 29 years old, she 24, and they have a 1½ year old baby, a big bouncing boy, although at first sight he looks sort of ugly. They are calm people who know how to take life as they have been taught with a tendency to improvement without getting too excited about it. They love each other because they are loved, perhaps they respect each other or rather try not to look into anything deeply so as not to upset their quiet lives."

After reading Previati's *La tecnica della pittura*, Boccioni decided to go to see him: "After quite a while I made up my mind and paid a visit to Gaetano Previati. He received me with the greatest courtesy and we talked for three hours! All the things we talked about! Such faith! What a difference between him and Balla, of whom he spoke very highly. I told him about my struggles, and it scared him to learn that besides the struggles of Art I also have to struggle to make a living! . . .

"I found him in agreement on almost everything. He is a soul full of faith and courage. He knows that he is regarded with scorn but this does not dismay him. He did not want to come and see the painting of Signora Massimino but I don't remember the reason; it seems to me he said he might wound me without it doing me any good whatsoever" (diary, March 2, 1908).

On March 16 Boccioni reported his impressions of Signora Massimino: "I worked little and have waited without too much energy to give the final touches to Signora Massimino's portrait. I wasn't mistaken in calling her a little soul capable of improvement. The more I talk to her the more I realize this. The strongest sign is the warmth with which she talks about or listens to things that involve the mysteries of the inner life. Not great mysteries but nevertheless sufficient to demonstrate the tension and lively attention of her little soul. As in all women, I have found in her that firm belief in some fundamental idea that serves them as a base. I think women have a much stronger sense of their personality than men."

On March 18 Boccioni considered the painting's merits: "Today I'll go on with Signora Massimino's portrait—I hope willingly. Who knows what this wretched portrait will add up to? I'm sure it's a step forward, but what an effort! Such poverty of resources, such a distance between what I wanted to do and what I've done. I leave it so as not to spoil it further. The only good thing about it is the perseverance. It lacks skill, emotion, originality: All it shows is my strong stomach, which didn't turn at such miserable results. I've scraped away the head perhaps thirty times; I have moved the composition around some ten times. One day when I'd finished the whole iron balustrade, which throws a shadow on the piazza (and with such difficulties of proportion . . .), I found the entire perspective of the windows to be wrong. . . . I wavered a day and a night and then scraped the whole thing and moved everything around. This has been repeated for the armchair, for the chair, for the figure, for the hands, for everything! I'm the only one who knows with what firm awareness I began. Yet you can see how blindly, foolishly, asininely I proceeded! Now it's almost finished or rather I don't know what more to do on it, and I let it go with the near certainty that there's little more I could do. Besides I feel that what I keep doing isn't getting me anywhere! . . . Would anyone be able to understand what this canvas is costing me, which will make so many colleagues and almost everyone who sees it laugh? And yet they're right! Has all my struggling led me to a failure that brings me no material reward since I did it as a gift? . . . From top to bottom I find things to criticize. There's nothing good except a certain paint quality that looks very solid to me and promising at certain points. But all the beautiful color in the world repels me if the forms are mean and unexpressive. And that's the defect of the whole painting: not much expression. And in art—too bad when it's not much! I'm going for a walk!"

Later the same day he added: "I've finished the portrait of Signora Massimino, or rather I'm dropping it because I don't know what else to do to it." But the painting continued to torment him, and on March 31 he wrote: "I brought Signora Massimino's portrait home. How inferior it is to what I dreamed of doing. Maybe I'll retouch it."

On the next day, April 1, Boccioni was visited by a lawyer, who after seeing his recent works—very numerous, as the artist declares—pointed out their uniformity. The artist noted his own feelings: "The same motionless poses, constantly women next to windows. The truth is that I, a lover of the open air, find in closed rooms the only place that comes close to my way of seeing. I hate shadows. Light, light, light. It's painful to want to show one's works for which one doesn't have any esteem, except for a few, even to polite people and to have to sing one's own praises and sometimes see a work taken away for 30 francs that you shouldn't give up for a thousand and which will end up in some miserable little room. . . . "

On the list of works sold, in the balance sheet drawn up by Boccioni on August 24, he noted gloomily: "To Signor Innocenzo Massimino of the 'Touring Club' a portrait of his wife gratis; [I was paid] only the costs. Much conscientious work (am I wrong?) but uncertain results."

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1927, no. 17; Rome 1953, no. 2 (*Donna alla finestra*); Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 12 (*Donna alla finestra*, 1909); Rome 1959, no. 64 (*Donna alla finestra*, ca. 1907); Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 20 (*Donna alla finestra*, 1909); Frankfurt 1963–64, no. 17 (*Donna alla finestra*, 1907); Reggio Calabria 1966, no. 2 (*Ritratto della signora Massimino* or *Donna alla finestra*); Verona 1985–86, no. 52

LITERATURE: Luzzatto 1924; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 6 (*Ritratto di donna*); Calvesi 1958; Ballo 1960, no. 45; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 28 (*Donna alla finestra*); De Grada 1962, pl. 4 (*Donna alla finestra*); Ballo 1964, no. 71; Perocco 1965, p. 103 (*Ritratto della signora Massimino*); Critica d'Arte 1965; Calvesi 1967, p. 48; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 185, no. 2252 (*Donna alla finestra* or *La signora Massimino*, 1907–8); Bruno 1969, no. 39 (*La signora Massimino* [*Donna alla finestra*]); Calvesi 1971, no. 1 (*Ritratto della signora Massimino*); Perocco 1972, p. 103 (*Ritratto della signora Massimino*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 299; Crispolti 1986, pl. 2

20A. *Self-Portrait* (recto)
Autoritratto 1908

B. *Self-Portrait* (verso)
Autoritratto 1905–1906

Oil on canvas
27 1/2 × 39 3/8 in. (70 × 100 cm.)
Signed and dated top right (recto):
U. Boccioni 1908
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

"Since the first of the month, I have been in Mama's house, well away from that highly antipathetic landlady and feeling quite at ease. In that house I finished a self-portrait that leaves me completely indifferent" (diary, May 13, 1908). Below this sentence Boccioni drew in pen, in a schematic fashion, the main lines of the recto composition, framing—perhaps in a window—the black shape of a figure between two large black sidepieces.

In the completed portrait the frame around the figure has disappeared. Thus the painting is an advance from his usual composition of a figure with its back to a window. Here, there is no real division between the figure and the space around it. There is, however, a deep break between foreground and background, which is barely bridged by the fragment of wall at the right. This architectural element, however, serves more to diffuse light than to establish perspective.

In this work Boccioni alludes for the first time to the outlying neighborhoods of Milan; it is thus a prelude to and anticipation of Boccioni's pre-Futurist paintings, with their factories and workshops. The painting itself is a transitional work, its brushwork still Divisionist in technique. Despite Boccioni's dissatisfaction with it, it is a notable precursor of future developments in his art.

When the portrait was shown at the summer exhibition of 1910 in Ca' Pesaro, Venice, it caught the eye of Gino Damerini, critic for the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, who admired the way the artist had "harmonized so well his own image and a background of open land and vacant lots from which new factories rise."

In the mid-1970s another self-portrait was discovered on the back of this canvas, which had been in the possession of Boccioni's friend Vico Baer and had been donated to the Pinacoteca di Brera in 1951. On stylistic grounds and because of the younger appearance of the artist, the newly found likeness appears to date from at least two years earlier than the 1908 work. The picture reveals a number of uncertain compositional elements; the space is defined by a wall on which two small pictures hang. The paint itself is thick, particularly in the background, where there is an obvious concern for effects of luminosity, such as the reflections on the face.

This second self-portrait was concealed by the crosspiece of the stretcher and was almost completely covered by patches of gray paint that masked the face. It was not signed, and very likely Boccioni was not satisfied with the result and decided to cover part of the work with gray paint. In 1979 the rediscovered picture was cleaned by the Gabinetto di Restauro of the Brera by scraping and the application of solvents. One can note, nonetheless, deep crackling on the face, hand, and brush handles, where the coat of gray paint had been applied.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 20A—Brunate 1909 (?); Venice 1910, no. 18; Milan 1916–17, no. 50 (or 56, 297, 225, 309); Rome 1953, no. 3; Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 6; Rome 1959, no. 65; Verona 1959; Winterthur 1959, no. 65; Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 18; Paris 1960–61, no. 27; New York 1961, pp. 24, 142, no. 23; Venice 1966, p. 10, no. 13; Milan 1970, no. 126; Milan 1973–74, no. 29; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 37; Milan 1982–83, nos. 24–25; Verona 1985–86, no. 83

LITERATURE: No. 20A—Difesa 1910a; Gazzetta di Venezia 1910d; Brizio 1939, p. 496; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 4; Calvesi 1958a, p. 150; Ballo 1960, no. 16; De Grada 1962, pl. 1; Ragghianti 1962, p. 145; Ballo 1964, no. 118; Perocco 1965, p. 99; Calvesi 1967, p. 76; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 190, no. 2333; Bruno 1969, cover, no. 62; Perocco 1972, p. 99; Kozloff 1973, p. 48; Birolli 1983, cover, no. 2; Calvesi and Coen 1983, nos. 44, 303; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 34, ill. 17; Ballo 1984, nos. 32–34



20A



20в

21. *April Evening*
Sera d'aprile 1908

Oil on canvas
19¾ × 19¾ in. (50 × 50 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 908
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

On April 19, 1908, Boccioni wrote in his diary: "I worked quite well all morning. I think I am making progress in the mechanics of using the brush. What terrible stuff, paint! I went back to Previati's and we talked for a couple of hours. What experience and what a good soul! The urge to paint some idea hit me again. From memory I did a rainy landscape titled *April Evening*, but I'm afraid I was not able to observe it sufficiently. If I paint from memory, I have the impression of becoming uniform and not very penetrating. Moreover I don't work with the same anxiety I feel when it's from life. I have observed nonetheless that the work holds together better and lets me bring out the element on which the subject's emotional force hinges."

Simple as it is, compared with Boccioni's other landscapes from the same period, this painting is interesting for the way in which he has constructed the space. A row of houses and factories stretches across the background and tapers off to the rear; a line of cherry trees cuts obliquely across the picture, and a low wall in the foreground is laid out with slightly emphasized foreshortening, setting up an unusual viewpoint for this glimpse of the outskirts of a Lombard city. Boccioni plays with color for its luminous effects, and the tiny tesselated tonalities and elongated brushstrokes are diffused and irradiated, conveying the sensation of a humid atmosphere.

LITERATURE: Veronesi 1955, p. 247 (*Primavera alla periferia di Milano*); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 24 (*Primavera alla periferia di Milano*); Ballo 1964, no. 105; Bruno 1969, no. 61a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 307

22. *Study for "The Story of a Seamstress": Sewing Machine*
Macchina da cucire 1908

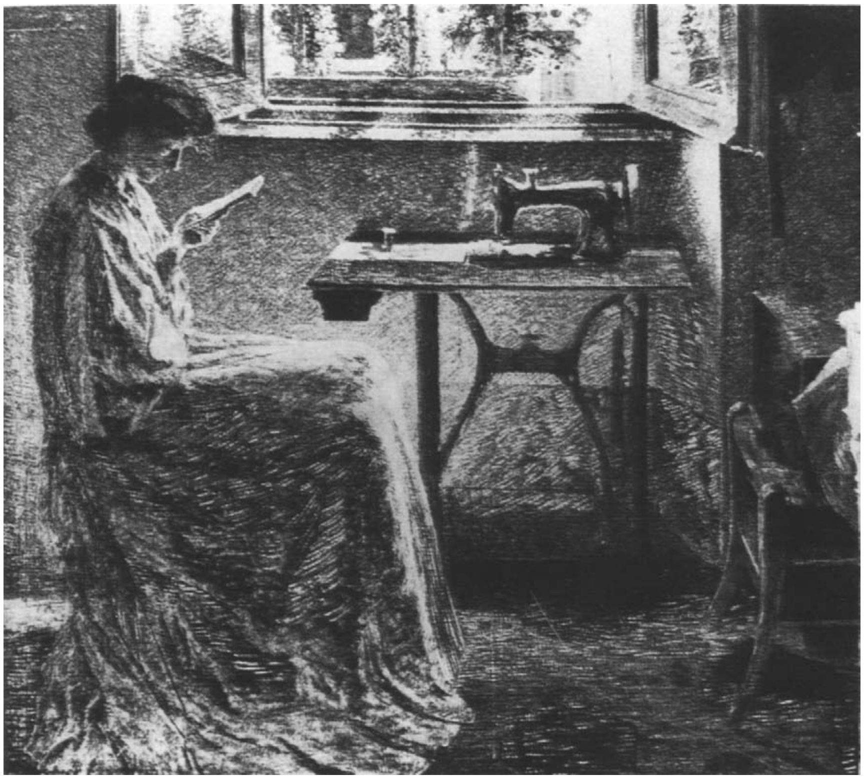
Pencil on paper
9⅜ × 6½ in. (23.8 × 16.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This drawing is one of the numerous preparatory studies for the painting *The Story of a Seamstress* (*Romanzo della cucitrice*), painted in 1908 and submitted, together with *Lombard Countryside* (no. 23A), to the Mylius competition at the Permanente di Milano. It received a rather cold reception from the critics, who dismissed the subject as old-fashioned and conventional without remarking on the work's exceptional technical fineness.

Boccioni's model was Ines, with whom he maintained a complicated amorous relationship for some ten years. When he began to sketch out the composition, he saw that once again he was using an image that had become habitual for him, a woman in an interior in



21

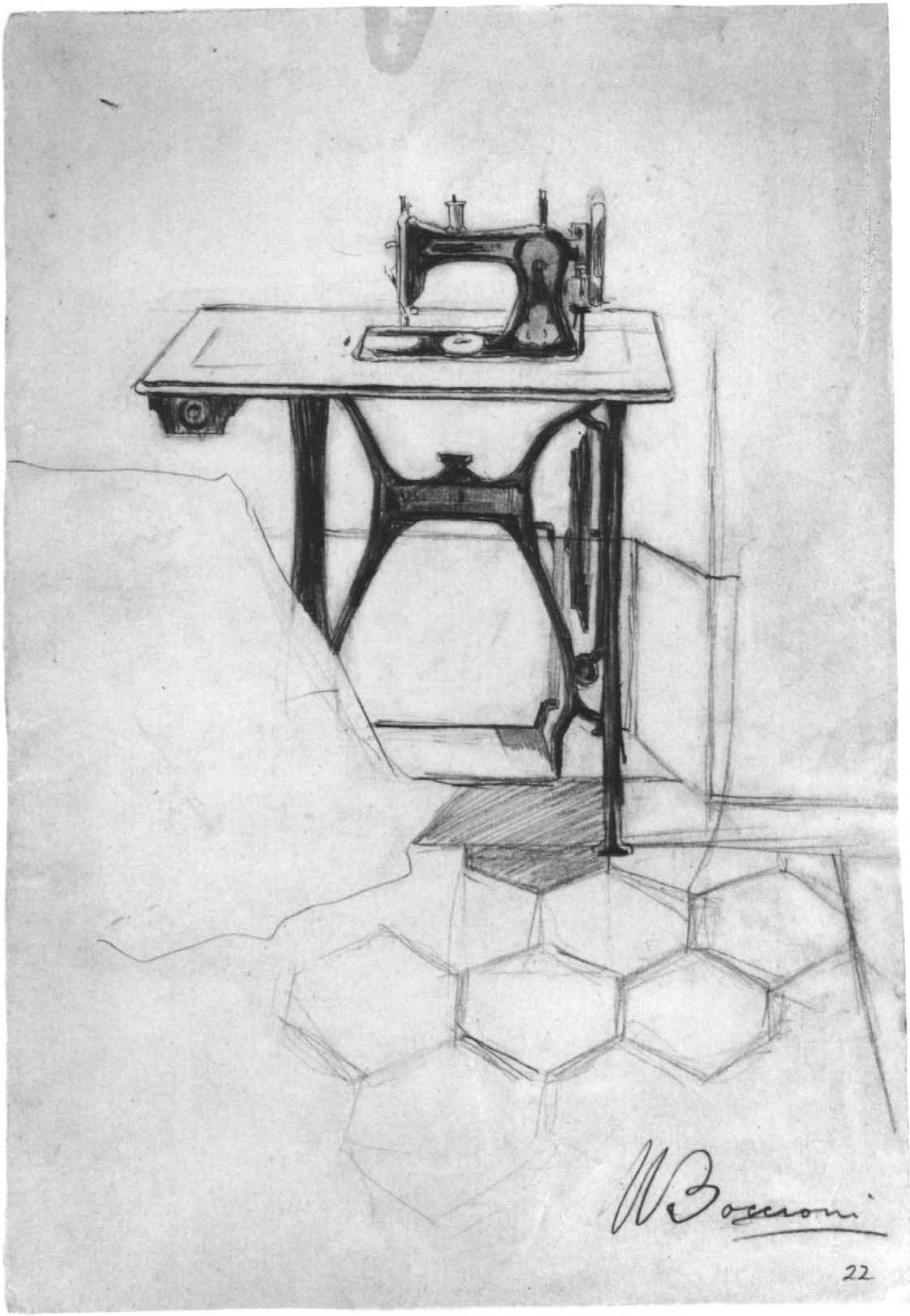


Story of a Seamstress (*Romanzo di una cucitrice*), 1908. Oil on canvas, 59×67 in. (150×170 cm.). Private collection

front of a window: "There is nothing new about it unfortunately; indeed it is a motif I have been criticized for repeating too often, and the fact is, I want this picture to sum up and write finis to the past period" (diary, May 13, 1908). By May 28 the painting was almost finished: "I saw it white; I imagined it silvery; I painted it red!!! Now I am taking it in hand again but I don't understand it at all. I prepared the drawing with great ease, drew the details with the utmost indifference. Looking at the figure, it seems to me drawn realistically (though I always have in mind a certain ideal figure) in a way that recalls Previati. Perhaps that comes from eliminating the marine colors and utilizing only vermilion. Began with the window empty, making much of the detail (paltry, perhaps) of a window with red shutters on the house opposite, with vases on the sill and inside. Now I have changed everything, put the flowers on the ledge under the window, thereby covering the window opposite. I was forgetting to say that I am still changing the figure toward what seems to me reality."

The painting shows a young woman in dressing gown reading in front of a window. A sewing machine and a chair are the only furnishings visible in the room. For every detail Boccioni prepared a precise drawing, and these must have been used to formulate the pictorial space.

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961, no. 35; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 107; Bruno 1969 (in margin at no. 40); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 312



22

23A. *Lombard Countryside*
Campagna lombarda 1908

Oil on canvas
36⅝ × 55⅛ in. (93 × 140 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom left: Umberto Boccioni A. 1908
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

B. *Study for "Lombard Countryside"* (recto)
Studio per Campagna lombarda 1908

C. *Studies with Script* (verso)

Pencil on paper
6⅛ × 4½ in. (15.6 × 11.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): Umberto Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

On May 13, 1908, while still at work on *The Story of a Seamstress,* Boccioni wrote in his diary of starting a new picture: "I have prepared the canvas for a landscape for another competition but so far have come up with nothing." Fifteen days later he had found his subject: "Mornings I get up at six, or a little earlier or a little later. I go out in the country, where I am preparing the studies for a landscape. . . . I am making small drawings on the side after having dashed down the overall idea for form and color on the canvas. While the sketch is drying, I prepare the details. When I do these tasks, I feel uncertain if the rush of emotion that suggested the picture to me really existed —or if it is sincere and strong and original enough to convince me to move on to the canvas."

On June 15 he noted that he was finding it easier to work on this picture than on the woman reading in *The Story of a Seamstress.* "Not only does the landscape keep me more entertained, and I put in less effort doing it, but it also pleases me more and I am more sure of what I am doing." After another twelve days, shortly before finishing the picture, he remarked: "In spite of everything I feel my works are coming along quite well. The landscape strikes me as stronger [than *The Story of a Seamstress*]. I feel I have put everything I can into it. . . . Even if it doesn't win, there will not be many of us painting this way. We shall see. I am praying to the Great Mother to give me during these last days [before the competition] the strength and love to keep going sincerely and serenely right to the end."

For all Boccioni's insistence that he wanted nothing more than to get away from the Divisionist approach, here he seems immersed in perfecting a technique which, as he seems aware, is much like that of Previati. However, besides taking special pains over the luministic rendering of his color, in the works of this period he was also delving deeper into questions of the spatial organization of his compositional elements.

On the bottom of the diary page of May 28, Boccioni drew a quick pen sketch of the layout of the country landscape. The study seen here is obviously one of the details that he drew while waiting for the paint to dry.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 23A—Milan 1908 (*Sinfonia campestre*); Milan 1960, no. 4 (*Campagna lombarda [Sinfonia campestre]*); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 146; Verona 1985–86, no. 54

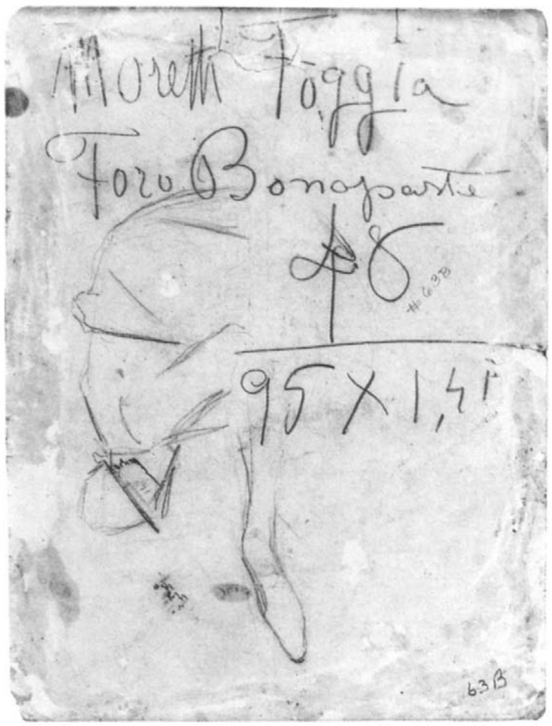
LITERATURE: No. 23A—Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 21; Ballo 1964, no. 134; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 188, no. 2302; Bruno 1969, no. 59 (*Campagna con alberi di alto fusto [Campagna lombarda: sinfonia campestre]*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 323
Nos. 23B and 23C—Taylor 1961b, no. 113 (ca. 1908–10); Ballo 1964, no. 133; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 324



23A



23B



23C

24. *Countryside with Trees*
Campagna con alberi 1908

Oil on canvas
11⅞ × 9⅞ in. (30 × 25 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni 908
Museo Civico di Belle Arti
(Collection Chiattone), Lugano

Like the preceding painting, this one was sold to Gabriele Chiattone, whom Boccioni considered as a protector and patron who could be relied upon to commission posters and illustrations that would help stave off poverty: "Thanks to Signor Chiattone, life runs on without many difficulties and lets me finish my pictures" (diary, June 15, 1908). There were arguments from time to time when Chiattone rejected works or obliged the artist to redo a poster: "And so in these last days, when I need all my energy and peace of mind to continue with the two works for the competition [*The Story of a Seamstress* and *Lombard Countryside*], Maecenas throws on my shoulders the loathsome burden of a commercial job, with the threat of not paying me. And because I stupidly deluded myself (what else could I do?) that I had a firm supporter in him, I neglected other contacts and the commercial scene and now, in this dead season, I find myself in his hands. Today he didn't give me the money for the frames. He was supposed to advance it to me and didn't have it: which may be true. I took a good look and detected in him the shabby, ignorant, miserly temperament that I had intuitively sensed behind his fatherly kindness" (diary, June 27, 1908).

This is one of a series of landscapes painted in the countryside around Milan, where the artist studied the relations between pictorial space and the effects of light. It is more an "impression"—as he defined this type of picture—than a finished work. Here he is interested in working with color tonalities to build up an image, specifically those Veronese greens, cobalts, and vermilions of which he often spoke.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1960, no. 5 (*Dintorni di Milano* [*Motivo agreste*]); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 147

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 33 (*Alberi*); Veronesi 1955, no. 12, p. 248; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 32 (*Paesaggio*, 32 × 35 cm.); De Grada 1962, no. 11 (*Dintorni di Milano* [*Motivo agreste*], 22 × 31 cm.); Ballo 1964, no. 93; Bruno 1969, no. 47 (*Campagna con alberi e contadini/Motivo agreste/Dintorni di Milano*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 333

25A. *Peasants at Work*
Contadini al lavoro 1908

Oil on canvas
9⅞ × 13¾ in. (25 × 35 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Museo Civico di Belle Arti
(Collection Chiattone), Lugano

B. *Study for "Peasants at Work"*
Studio per Contadini al lavoro 1908

Pencil on paper
4⅝ × 5⅞ in. (11.7 × 14.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This painting belongs to the group of small but very fine canvases Boccioni sold to his "Maecenas," the lithographer and engraver Gabriele Chiattone.

Here Boccioni's brushwork has become more full-bodied and thick, creating a broader and less succinct paint surface which is still, however, very much influenced by the Divisionist technique. The peasants are aligned on a diagonal that bisects the composition; the image itself is thus defined plastically by the compositional scheme.

The drawing is annotated with the colors to be used and the warm or cold tonal values that could give body to the representation.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 25A—Milan 1916–17, no. 90 (*Risaiole*); Milan 1960, no. 13

LITERATURE: No. 25A—Veronesi 1955, no. 12, p. 246 (*Campagna milanese*, ca. 1907); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 10 (*Le coglitrici*); Ballo 1964, no. 97; Bruno 1969, no. 50 (*Campagna con quattro contadini al lavoro/I contadini al lavoro*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 339; no. 25B—Taylor 1961b, no. 6 (ca. 1907); Ballo 1964, no. 96; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 340



24



25A



25B

26. *Lombard Landscape*
Paesaggio lombardo 1908

Oil on canvas
15 3/4 × 26 3/4 in. (40 × 68 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

Here Boccioni continues to play with perspective views with high horizons; the foreground, a grassy meadow, is exaggerated in relation to the houses and trees in the background. The long, frayed brushstrokes are broken up and divided into tiny particles of tonal nuances, creating a dynamic based on the lively definition of color.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1960, no. 3 (ill.); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 151

LITERATURE: Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 23 (*Paesaggio di campagna*); Ballo 1964, no. 135; Bruno 1969, no. 57 (*Campagna con contadini al lavoro/Paesaggio lombardo*); Perocco 1972, p. 99; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 347



26



27

27. *Passing Train*
Treno che passa 1908

Oil on canvas
9 × 22⅞ in. (23 × 58 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 908
Museo Civico di Belle Arti (Collection Chiattone), Lugano

In its proportions and composition, this canvas recalls *Roman Landscape* (no. 2) of 1903, although now the landscape is viewed in the flattened perspective characteristic of many of Boccioni's works created in 1908.

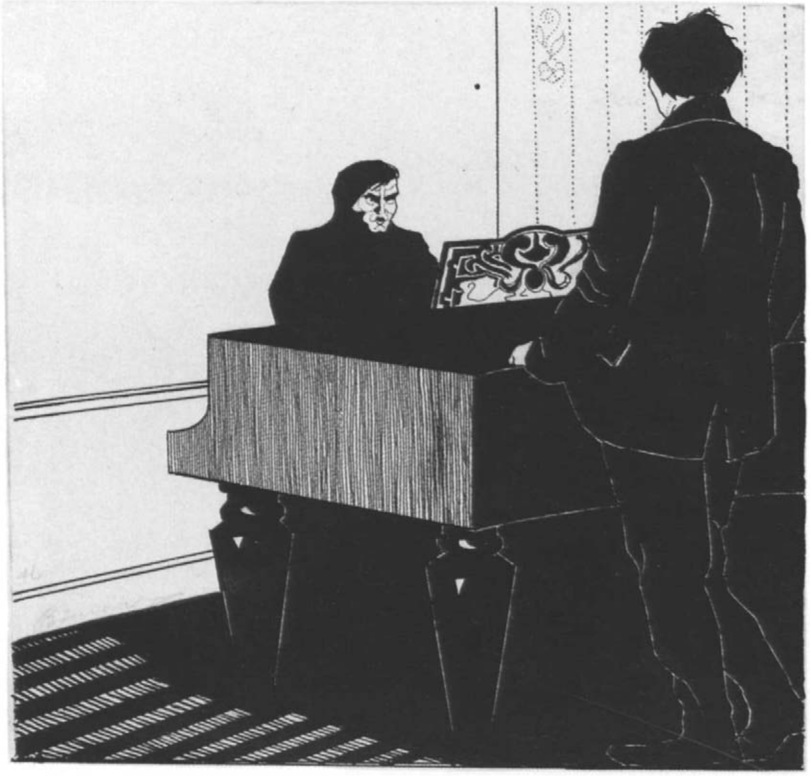
The train, belching smoke as it speeds along, cuts diagonally across, and further emphasizes, the straight horizon line that divides the fields and sea from the sky. The sails of two boats are introduced on the left side to balance the composition. Thanks to the stretch of open sea and sky, the pictorial space does not strike the viewer as compressed but, on the contrary, seems to expand, thereby compensating for the elongated format of the canvas.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 89; Milan 1960, no. 9 (ill.); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 124

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 33; Veronesi 1955, no. 12, p. 249; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 33 (*Il trenino*); De Grada 1962, no. 28 (*Il treno a vapore*); Ballo 1964, no. 136; Martin 1968, no. 22; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 348

Detail of no. 27 ▷





28



29

28. *Pianist and Listener*
Pianoforte 1908

Ink on paper
7×7¼ in. (17.8×18.4 cm.)
Signed on baseboard at left: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Boccioni's activities as a commercial artist kept him alert for new formal solutions. In his search for an incisive graphic style, he studied the works of Dürer, Rembrandt, and Beardsley: "I have spent two extremely agitated nights full of mad ideas and dreams. I cannot deny that this is the effect of the two books with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley that I have had in my hands for the past two days. One is a sort of monograph on him by Arthur Simon [Symons], the other a collection of literary texts illustrated by this extremely original artist. What I have read about him has had a great impact on me. His illustrations have made me realize how inferior I am, not only concerning form but also in the necessary, continuous, uninterrupted energy of the head that guides the hand. I confess that for some time now I have had the sensation more and more clearly that my hand does not obey my head, that something (how original, I don't know) is beginning to emerge out of the chaos of ideas and forms. I say this at twenty-five and a half, and Beardsley died at twenty-six, a celebrated illustrator, musician, writer, poet!

"I find in this artist a potential that Previati counseled me to aim for in these words: Let yourself go, you need to let yourself go as much as possible. That is something completely lacking in me. The worry—or more the fear—that I won't draw and shade and color well (which means according to everything that tradition and teaching have drummed into me): That is the great obstacle to spreading my wings.

"Constant study from life, the awareness of my own inferiority in reproducing it as compared with what I see, having never worked directly from my imagination—all this means that the few ideas that come to me have ended up stillborn for fear of executing them badly. I am filled with the utmost uncertainty: If I see a subject, as happened with the *Giardino chiuso*, I don't know how to execute it: in oils? pen? pastel? Could this possibly be pettier and more paltry? It is terror of the material that stifles me" (diary, April 25, 1908).

The present drawing was probably done in response to the demands of customers whom Boccioni defined as "commercial." This was likely a first effort; in a private collection there is a more complete version, which is filled with decorative elements, ranging from a neoclassicizing linear design on the rear wall to an exaggerated contrast between blacks and whites on the ornamental floor tiling. Also in that version, the physiognomy of the pianist is more synthetic and abstracted. The same squared-off face is found in another study—also in the Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York—which only depicts the pianist's head. The example shown here, however, comes closest to Beardsley's characteristic way of drawing and to his concern for striking a balance of contrasts among black, white, and gray.

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 13 (ca. 1907); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 101 (*Pianista e cantante*); Ballo 1964, no. 348 (1910); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 363

29. *Kneeling Allegorical Figure*
Figura allegorica inginocchiata 1908

Ink and pencil on paper
9¼×7⅝ in. (23.5×19.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

To gain a source of income Boccioni occupied himself with graphic works for several months during 1908. The present drawing was probably intended as a heading for an advertisement or as a title-page decoration. The female figure, kneeling with arms outstretched in supplication, conveys a state of tragic desperation, an effect created in part by the painterly use of ink.

Boccioni put a great deal of himself into his commercial art activity, which afforded him the opportunity to probe more deeply into his studies of perspective and to examine the relationship of small details to overall composition. Such commissions were often the occasion to explore the sinuous style of drawing so much a feature of Symbolist graphic art —that is the case in this sketch, which is not without echoes of classical imagery as well.

On another sheet in the same collection there is a very summary pencil sketch of the same motif, a first idea for this ink drawing.

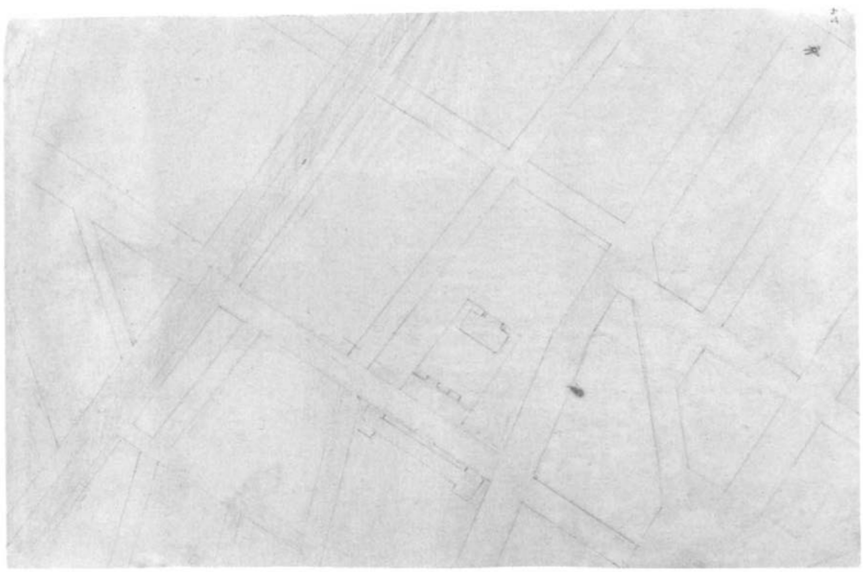
LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 56; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 121; Ballo 1964, no. 139; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 367

30A. *Agitated Crowd Surrounding a High Equestrian Monument* (recto)
Folla intorno al monumento equestre 1908

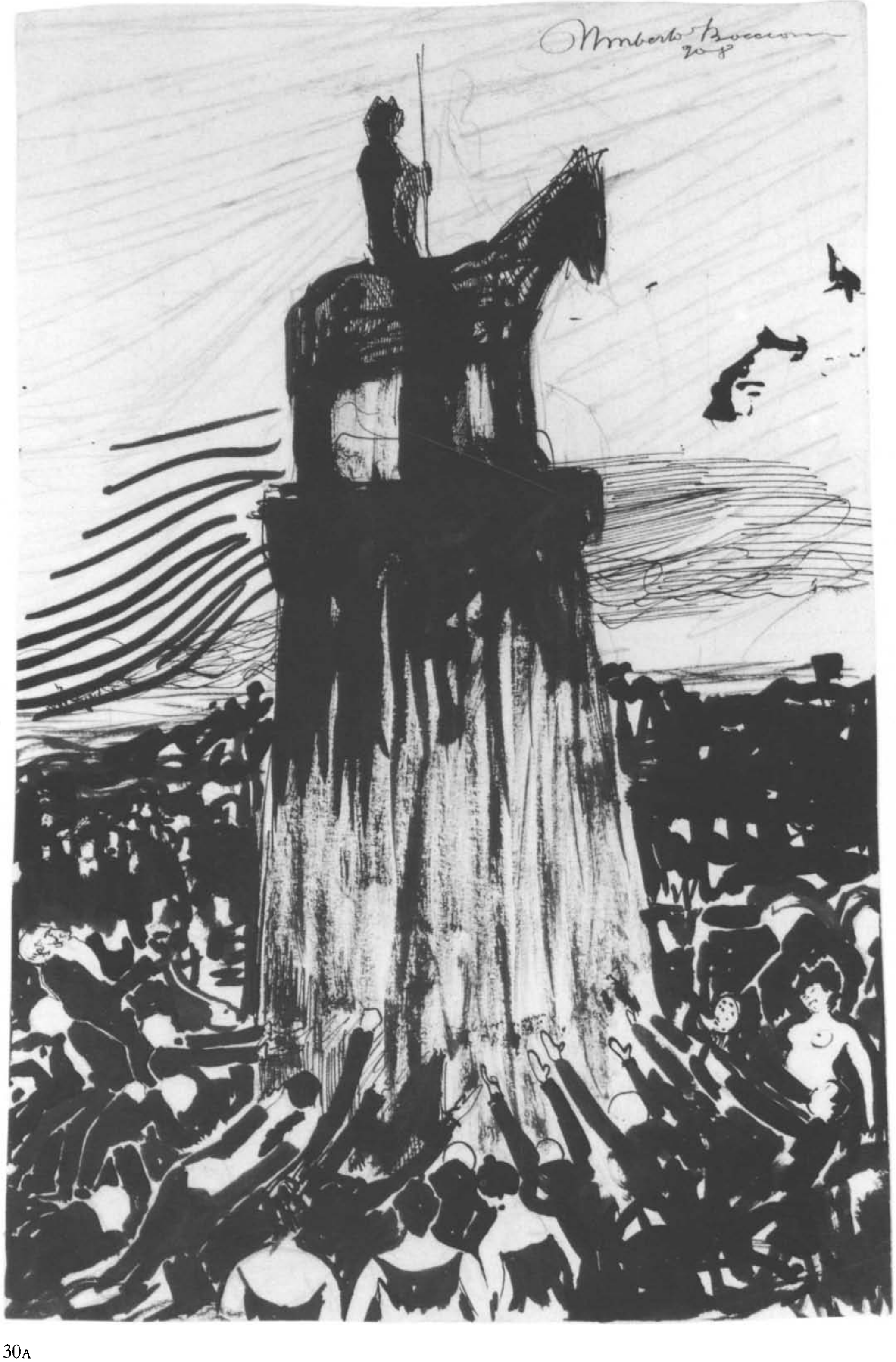
B. *Fragment of a City Plan* (verso)

Ink and pencil on paper
14¼×9½ in. (36.2×24.1 cm.)
Signed and dated top right (recto): Umberto Boccioni 908
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This equestrian monument, sketched in schematic fashion, seems to derive from that of Cansignorio della Scala, one of the Scaligere overlords commemorated in a group of Gothic tombs in the churchyard of Santa Maria Antica in Verona. Cansignorio, son of Mastino II,



30B



30A

ordered his mausoleum to be built during his lifetime, but at his death in about 1375, it was not yet finished. Designed by Bonino da Campione, it is the most ambitious and richly ornamented of the Scaligere tombs. High up, on the truncated hexagonal pyramid of the monument, a six-sided plinth supports an equestrian statue.

The swift and dashing character of Boccioni's drawing comes from his application of ink with a brush, treating it like tempera. In various drawings of this period Boccioni exploited the same ascending compositional scheme, and the idea of a chaotic crowd at the foot of the monument is found in many other works of this time and later and would culminate in paintings such as *Riot in the Galleria* (no. 49). Calvesi finds stylistic similarities in this drawing to Edvard Munch's 1897 lithograph *Funeral March*, above all in the extended lines of the arms ascending to the base of the pedestal.

EXHIBITIONS: New York 1973–74, no. 134; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 20; New Haven 1983, no. 15, p. 82

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961a, p. 22 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 55; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 108; Ballo 1964, no. 138; Calvesi 1973, no. 11; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 368 (verso no. A7)

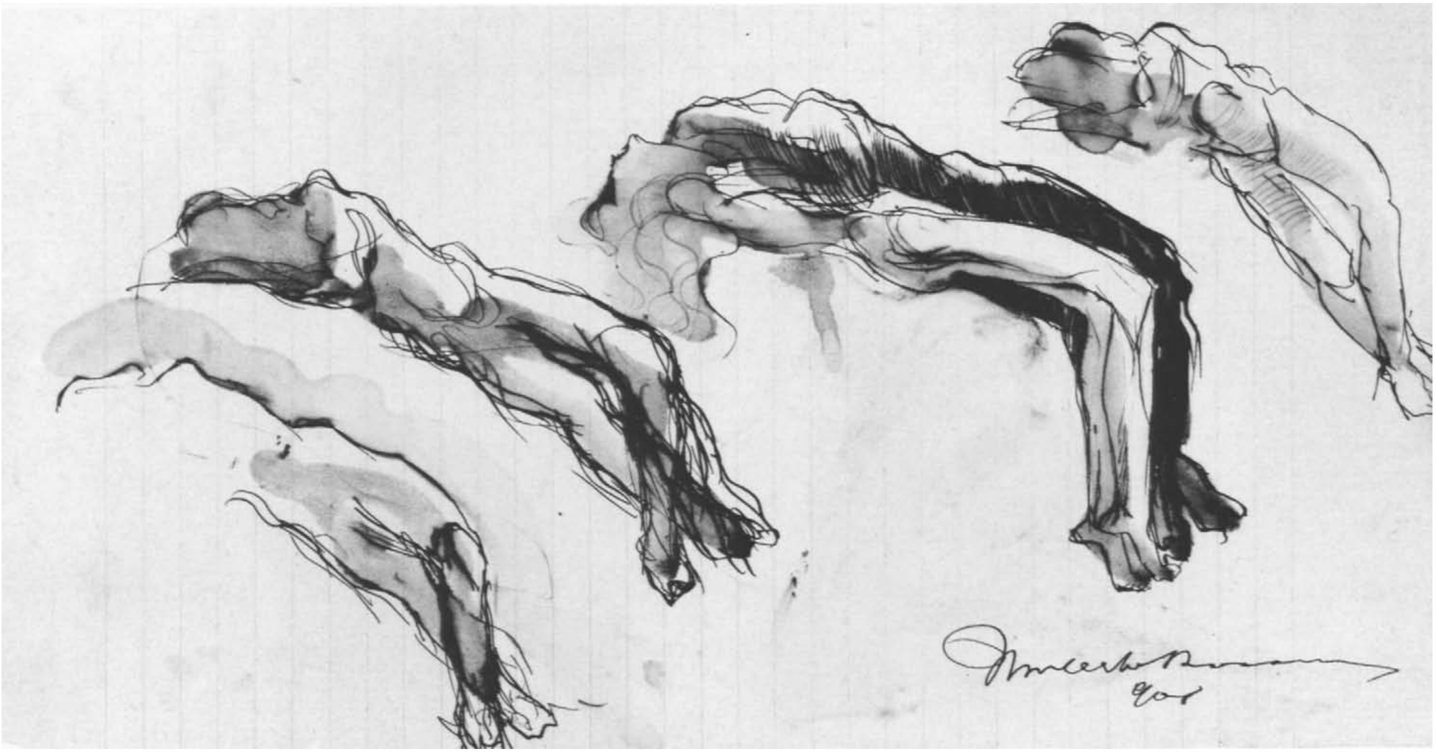
31. *Study for "The Dream": Sheet with Three Studies of a Reclining Nude and a Study of a Reclining Couple* *Studio per Il sogno* 1908

Ink and watercolor on paper
6⅜ × 12⅛ in. (16.2 × 30.8 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Umberto Boccioni 908
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This sketch is a study for *The Dream: Paolo and Francesca*, a painting on which Boccioni worked in 1908–1909. The subject—the damned couple whom Dante consigned to the second circle of the Inferno—was depicted in the 1880s by the Symbolist Gaetano Previati, and Boccioni was indebted to his work. While the earlier picture was marked by evocative symbolism, in Boccioni's canvas undefined masses swarm in intricate confusion in a space devoid of perspectival definition, a morass in which the bodies of the damned are thrust above the surface or dragged into the depths.

The painting and the studies for it belong to a moment of crisis. As early as April 1908, after being shaken by his first acquaintance with the work of Aubrey Beardsley, Boccioni noted in his diary that he had a presentiment that something new, more instinctive, and as yet entirely undefinable was beginning to emerge in his own art.

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 39; Ballo 1964, no. 157; Martin 1968, no. 17; Bruno 1969, no. 69b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 377



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32. *The Mother*
La madre 1909

Ink on paper
13×11 in. (33×28 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 909/2
Private collection

This portrait of the artist's mother, so formidable in its immediacy and presence, is certainly related to the art of Dürer, which Boccioni studied and deeply admired. A year before making this drawing, he had written in his diary: "Dürer is immense, great, a titan; he is as *terribile* as genius can be in the act of creation. I am awestruck on one hand by the calmness of his style, on the other by the *terribilità* of his composition, the vehemence of the technique, which strains, distorts, deforms, yet moves forward toward the Ideal! How well he grasps everything, strikes, nails down, slashes, screams and then calms, caresses, polishes, incises, refines, his vision moving farther and farther; he rests only to revive, give vent to his fury, and cry out! This is something of the impression he makes on me. What portraits! What landscapes! What compositions! He is immense! How the imprint of his style makes one forgive certain overly realistic visions of his dull and graceless race!" (February 1, 1908).

EXHIBITION: Milan 1973–74, no. 32

LITERATURE: Birolli 1972, p. 10; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 394

33. *Head of an Old Man*
Testa di vecchio 1909

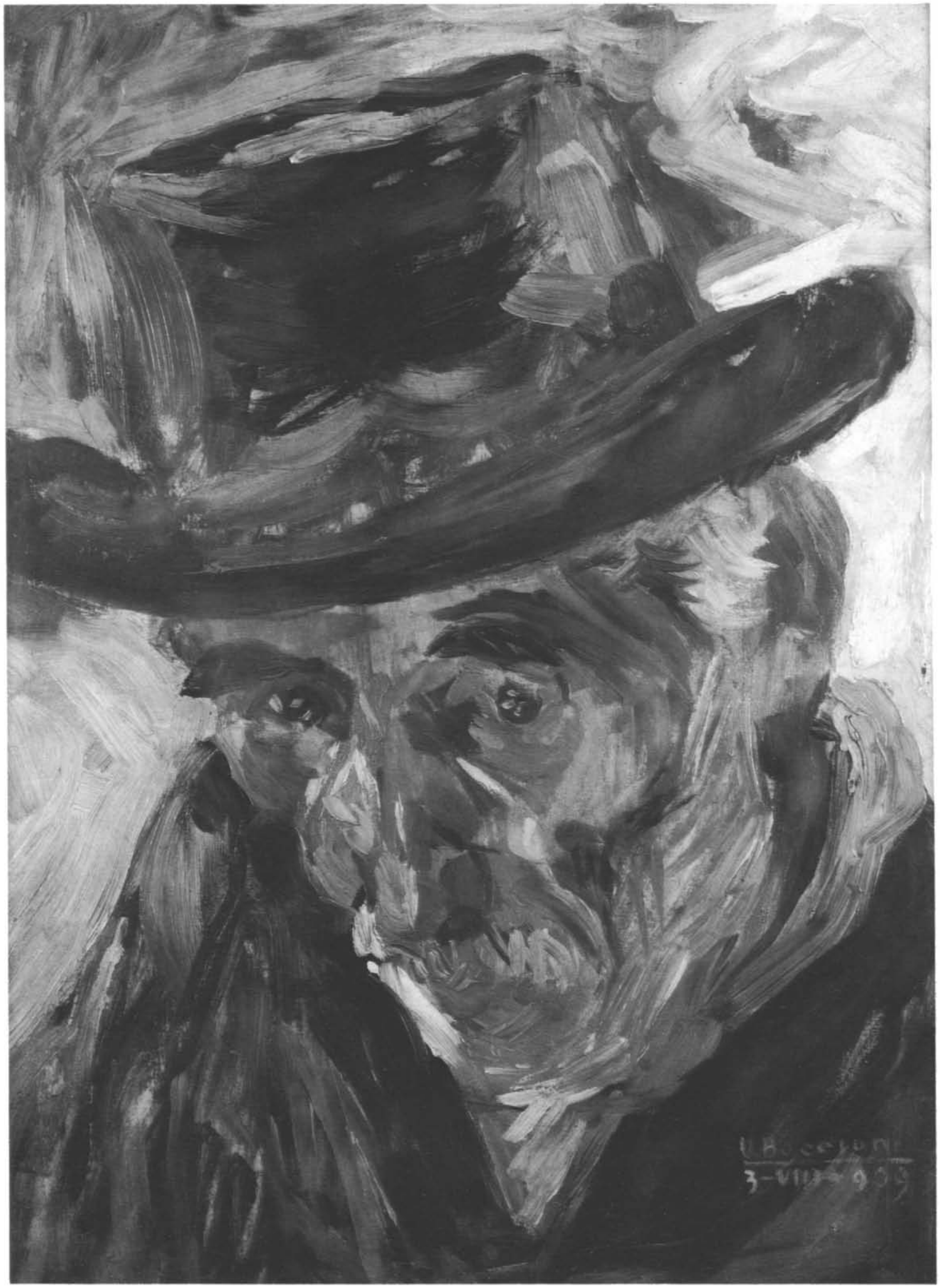
Oil on wood
15¾×11⅜ in. (40×29 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 3 VIII 909
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (Collection Boschi–Di Stefano), Palazzo Reale, Milan

By 1909 Boccioni had begun experimenting with new ways of painting different from the Divisionist technique with which he had been working. By the end of 1908 he was moving away from brushwork that involved dense, overlapping colors and was painting in a broader, looser fashion. The search for his own style was extremely difficult, and his anguish is evident in one of the last passages he would write in his diary: "Is it possible that I may have to give up, I, who torture myself all day long to make my life and my art kneel down in sincerity before Nature, and that those whom I see are cheerful, well dressed, happy (at least they seem so to me) should win out? Must all my hopes vanish this way? And what will I do then with my life?" (July 28, 1908). On August 24 Boccioni expressed his thoughts, feelings, and worries to his diary for the last time, thus ending that self-exploration of his inner and outer life.

The present painting, with its violent color and rapidly painted, closely packed fields, has notable stylistic similarities in both pal-



32



33

ette and technique to the work of the Expressionists, which seems to have particularly interested Boccioni during this period.

The following appears on the back of the panel: "Umberto Boccioni—Via Adige 23—Milano—L. 0,80." Most likely the inscription dates from Boccioni's one-man show in the summer of 1910 at Ca' Pesaro in Venice, where this was one of the forty-two works he exhibited. This would explain the indication of its price, eighty lire, as well.

The painting was acquired in 1939 from the Galleria Cairola in Milan by Gaetano Boschi, a passionate collector of contemporary art who later left his collection to the Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan.

EXHIBITIONS: Venice 1910, no. 9; Milan 1974, pp. 16, 17; Verona 1985–86, no. 60

LITERATURE: Precerutti-Garberi 1974, pp. 16, 17; Caramel, Fiorio, and Pirovano 1980, pp. 26-27, no. 235; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 408

34. *Interior with the Artist's Mother at Work*
Interno con la madre che lavora 1909

Oil on wood
12⅝ × 9⅞ in. (32 × 25 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1909
Private collection. Courtesy Galleria dello Scudo, Verona

Boccioni gave this small painting to Nino Barbantini, the critic and director of Ca' Pesaro in Venice, who had invited the artist to exhibit in the rooms of the palazzo on the occasion of the fifth annual summer exhibition. This was Boccioni's first one-man show, and he was always grateful for it to Barbantini. The meeting between the artist and the critic took place in the first months of 1910, as Barbantini recalled in an unpublished article: "I met Boccioni at the beginning of 1910, one day when we were introduced on the Merceria, and I saw in him a lean, alert face, strong and attentive, tenacious and pugnacious, ready to laugh; frankly, the face—in my opinion—of a mechanic. His dynamic theories and his works, contrived like machines, and also the rapidity of his drawings and gestures, may have been related to the impression I had of him." The show opened on July 16, 1910, with a great publicity campaign organized by the Futurists, who had already formed themselves into a group; it closed on October 20. It was received with a certain reserve by the press, which was expecting more explosive, "Futurist" works, when in fact the works shown had been painted long before the signing of the manifesto.

In a letter, written at the closing of the show, Boccioni invited Barbantini to choose one of his paintings: "Please accept one of the small works, for which as I recall you stated a preference, and keep it in memory of me and as a token of my gratitude." In another letter, which can be dated to the end of October, Boccioni wrote to Barbantini: "I'm glad you kept the little impression of the interior with my mother at work. To me too it seemed good and I'm glad that it's with you."

Like the *Head of an Old Man* (no. 33), this painting belongs to a time of new artistic growth toward a more expressionistic phase.



34

The small Divisionist brushstrokes are enlarged to the point of becoming streaks of color and light. Boccioni is trying to abandon, as he wrote to Barbantini, that "insistence on veristic details" that had bound him to Balla's teaching.

EXHIBITIONS: Venice 1910, no. 3 (or nos. 6, 15, or 16 [*Impressione*]); Milan 1924, no. 15 (*La madre che cuce*); Venice 1948, no. 24 (*Figura*); Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 11 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 23 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Verona 1971, no. 16 (*La madre che cuce*); Venice 1984; Verona 1985–86, no. 61

LITERATURE: De Grada 1962, no. 53 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Ballo 1964, no. 229 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Perocco 1965, p. 112 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 191, no. 2347 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Bruno 1969, no. 77 (*Interno: la Mamma che lavora*); Perocco 1972, p. 112 (*Interno: Mamma che lavora*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 409; Ballo 1984, no. 42 (ill.)

35. *The Foltzer Factory*
Fabbrica Foltzer 1908–1909

Oil on canvas
10 × 46½ in. (25.5 × 118 cm.)
Private collection

The extremely unusual format of this canvas was dictated by the shape of the building depicted, and in all likelihood the work was commissioned by Emilio Foltzer, the owner of this plant which turned out lubricating oils and greases. The commission is likely to have come to Boccioni through Gabriele Chiattone for whom he produced numerous publicity posters in 1908.

Because of the way in which the long, low building is disposed within the pictorial space, the choice of a view from above, and the return to Divisionist brushwork, the picture can be considered a forerunner of the views of urban outskirts Boccioni would paint in 1909. In style and subject it can be dated to late 1908 or early 1909.

In the first months of 1907, after his trips to Paris and Russia, Boccioni had begun to feel an urge to seek out new subjects more appropriate to the modern age: "I feel I want to paint what is new, the product of our industrial time. I am nauseated by old walls, old palaces, old subjects based on reminiscences: I want to have my eye on the life of our day. Fields, quiet things, pretty little houses, woods, flushed and strong faces, workers' limbs, weary horses, etc.—all that emporium of modern sentimentalism has well and truly wearied me. Indeed, modern art as a whole strikes me as old. I want what is new, expressive, formidable! I want to cancel out all the values I have known, know, and am losing sight of, and this so as to remake, to reconstruct on new bases! All the past, marvelously grand as it is, oppresses me. I want what is new!" (diary, March 14, 1907).

The present painting, with its unusual and thoroughly new subject, is worthy of special note as one of the first successful essays in what the artist thought of as an authentically "modern" direction.

EXHIBITION: Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 172, pp. 137–39

LITERATURE: Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 419



35





36

Detail of no. 36 ▷



36. *Morning*
Mattino 1909

Oil on canvas
23⅝ × 21⅝ in. (60 × 55 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Private collection

This canvas, along with *Twilight* (no. 37), was shown in late 1909 at the Famiglia Artistica, an annual exhibition held in Milan; both had probably been recently finished. *La Perseveranza* noted "the bold and youthful violence of hues" in the paintings; *Il Secolo* judged them "a daring exercise in luminosity."

The violent colors, resolutely juxtaposed, dissolve and tend to be extended in impetuous streaks, giving this work a finished balance. The diagonal road breaks the aggressive bands of color. The perspective construction recalls previous works; the foreshortening from above is related to the background in the portrait of Signora Massimino (no. 19). Boccioni appeared to be dissatisfied with the Expressionist approach that had occupied him in recent months, and he returned with increased perseverance to working out visions of light and atmospheric impressions, concerns that recall French painting of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1909–1910, no. 170; Milan 1910, no. 145; Venice 1910, no. 2; Milan 1916–17, no. 52; Milan 1924 (*Sobborgo di Milano*; listed as no. 23 [*Cavallo di traino*]?); Frankfurt 1963–64, no. 19; Venice 1966, p. 10, no. 16 (*Il mattino*); Rome 1982, no. 23 (*Periferia*); Milan 1982–83, no. 42 (*Il mattino*); Verona 1985–86, no. 65

LITERATURE: Perseveranza 1909; Secolo 1909; Costantini 1933, p. 129; Severini 1933, p. 354 (*Paesaggio suburbano*); Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 7; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, p. 257, no. 88 (*Periferia*); Ballo 1964, no. 232 (*Il mattino*); Calvesi 1967, p. 20; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 190, no. 2324 (*Il mattino* or *Periferia*); Martin 1968, no. 68; Bruno 1969, no. 93 (*Strada di periferia [con due carri a cavalli]* or *Studio: Il mattino*); Apollonio 1970, pl. 2; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 420

37. *Twilight*
Crepuscolo 1909

Oil on canvas
35⅜ × 47¼ in. (90 × 120 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1909
Collection Dai Pra, Treviso

This painting was exhibited with *Morning* (no. 36) at the Famiglia Artistica in Milan in 1909. While *Morning* demonstrates an aggressive sense of color, used in its purest values, in *Twilight* the harshness of the hues is annulled by blended tonalities. The present painting is executed with a raw Pointillism that allows the colors, skillfully applied in layers, to emerge and intersect. In *Morning* a sharp brilliant light vivifies the scene; here the city is enveloped in a gloomy atmosphere, and the veil of dusk falls over and obscures the forms of horses, people, and buildings.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1909–1910, no. 172; Venice 1910, no. 12; Milan 1910–11, no. 57; Milan 1916–17, no. 88; Venice 1966, p. 10, no. 20 (*Periferia*); Turin 1967, no. 2; Milan 1970, no. 133; Cortina d'Ampezzo 1970, no. 1; Milan 1971, p. 65, no. 43; Milan 1982–83, no. 44 (*Crepuscolo* or *Strada di periferia con cantieri edili* or *Periferia*); Verona 1985–86, no. 66

LITERATURE: Sarfatti 1917; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 8; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, p. 257, no. 91 (*Periferia*); De Grada 1962, no. 50; Ballo 1964, no. 235; Perocco 1965, p. 116; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 190, no. 2334 (*Il crepuscolo* or *Periferia*); Bruno 1969, no. 94 (*Strada di periferia con cantieri edili [Crepuscolo]*); Perocco 1972, p. 116; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 421



37



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38. *Factories at Porta Romana*
Officine a Porta Romana 1909

Oil on canvas
29½×57⅛ in. (75×145 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan

The composition of this painting is very similar to that of *Twilight* (no. 37), but it has been rendered in the strongly horizontal format Boccioni often favored. His increasing mastery of Divisionist technique gives great strength and precision to this work, in which a line of factories and houses fades to a horizon illumined by strong daylight. The light is crystallized in innumerable beams of color that obliquely cut the block of buildings under construction, thus accentuating the foreshortened view. Boccioni lived in this area—Bastioni di Porta Romana—and here he shows its lively movement and the great industrial expansion of Milan.

Factories at Porta Romana has been variously dated 1908 and 1909, but because of its stylistic similarities to *Twilight* and its depiction of urban outskirts, a theme that Boccioni developed around 1909, it can be ascribed to the later date.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 88; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 38 (1908); Milan 1973–74, no. 26; Milan 1982–83, no. 26 (1908); Venice 1986, p. 30 (1908)

LITERATURE: Carrà 1924, p. 3, ill. (*Alle porte di Milano*); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 5, p. 32 (1908); Calvesi 1958a, pp. 150–51 (1908); Mazzariol 1958, p. 16; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 97 (*Periferia*, signed and dated lower right: "U. Boccioni 1909," formerly Collection Vico Baer); De Grada 1962, pl. 5 (*Periferia* [*Officine a Porta Romana*]); Ballo 1964, no. 120 (1908); Calvesi 1967, no. 13, p. 55; Martin 1968, no. 27; Bruno 1969, no. 63 (*Officine a Porta Romana di Milano / La strada di periferia / Periferia–Il meriggio*, 1908); Perocco 1972, p. 102; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 14 (1908); Del Guercio 1980, p. 28; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 423; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 38, ill. 19

39A. *Portrait of a Young Woman*
Ritratto femminile 1909

Pastel on paper
21¼ × 22⅞ in. (54 × 58.1 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 909
Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna—Ca' Pesaro, Venice



B. *Young Woman Reading*
Donna che legge 1909

Ink and colored chalk on paper
16½×11½ in. (41.9×29.2 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1909
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Slifka, New York

In the first work, which is thought to be a portrait of his sister, Boccioni returns to a favorite theme—a figure in front of a window. Now, however, he deepens the luministic effect by placing the figure in front of the light source. The areas in shadow are emphasized by the burst of bright light, creating a dramatic contrast that lends added forcefulness to the figure of the woman. Foreground and background work together in forced opposition to construct this impressive image.

Here Boccioni's mastery of pastel attains a new swiftness, freshness, and terseness. The long, boldly resolute strokes, laid on obliquely and without recourse to *sfumato*, stress the most important details, and the absence of chiaroscuro and the use of white-lead highlights give unexpected strength to a medium usually confined to pale and delicate tints. Thanks to the swiftness of the technical handling, the entire image is thrown into movement and is caught up in a dynamic whirling of light.

The second work shares these qualities and may also be a portrait of Boccioni's sister.



39B

EXHIBITIONS: No. 39A—Venice 1910, no. 31(?) (*Leggendo*); Venice 1958, p. 65, no. 10 (*Sorella che legge*); Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 24 (*La sorella*); Venice 1966, p. 9, no. 4 (*La sorella che legge*); Mestre 1982, p. 14 (*Ritratto della sorella che legge*); Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 176; Verona 1985–86, no. 63

LITERATURE: No. 39A—Taylor 1961b, no. 78; De Grada 1962, no. 23 (*La sorella controluce*); Ballo 1964, no. 226 (*La sorella*); Perocco 1965, p. 110 (*La sorella che legge*); Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 192, no. 2372 (*La sorella che legge*); Bruno 1969, no. 86 (*La sorella [con un libro]*); Perocco 1972, p. 110 (*La sorella che legge*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 435; Ballo 1984, no. 22 (*La sorella*)

No. 39B—Taylor 1961b, no. 130; Ballo 1964, no. 176 (*Figura femminile*); Bruno 1969, no. 82c.; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 450

40. *The Reaper*
Il falciatore 1909

Oil on canvas
24⅜ × 36¼ in. (62 × 92 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1909
Private collection, Milan

This is the only known work in which Boccioni represents an allegorical subject. Still caught up in symbolist concerns, he persisted in the search for images to express his idealism. The theme of this atypical painting is difficult to determine. A procession of seven women in long mantles, each carrying a flaming lamp in her hands, files diagonally from the center toward the background and disappears in an indistinct halo at the upper right. A reaper, his face hooded, crosses the field with a scythe; he advances toward an old man, who sits with a young woman, guarding a fire. Symbols of death and rebirth are evident in this work which is also known as *Allegory of Life*. Death, in the guise of the reaper, is accompanied by the seven lamps, which in the Apocalypse represent the seven spirits of God and, since seven is the number of perfection, express the divine absolute.

There is a limited palette, in which greens and violets prevail, and the technique is still tied to Previati's Divisionism, which Boccioni did not abandon until about 1911. The painting was in the Sommaruga collection in Milan; above the signature there is a partially obliterated dedication: "*A Federico So . . .*"

EXHIBITIONS: Prato 1971–72, pl. 5; Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 181

LITERATURE: Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 454



41. *Three Women*
Tre donne 1909–1910

Oil on canvas
70⅞ × 52 in. (180 × 132 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1909–10
Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan

This painting, which portrays Boccioni's mother and sister with, in the center, Ines, his longtime intimate (see no. 45), was exhibited in the summer of 1910 at the Permanente in Milan. *La Provincia di Brescia* remarked: "The Boccioni is interesting. In homage to Futurism, which does not care for nudity, he has painted some women in chemises. Good things technically but bad aesthetically." The *Corriere della Sera* noted: "Boccioni exhibits a painting of three women, the expressions of whose faces show remarkable qualities of observation."

In 1911 the painting was shown at the Mostra d'Arte Libera, held in the pavilions of the former Ricordi factory, in which the Futurists enthusiastically participated. Sarfatti (1917) recalled: "He exhibited the large canvas *Three Women*, painted with unconventional luminism, not as it had congealed in the brief yet already rigid tradition of Italian Divisionism, but agile and ductile, consistent with pictorial emotion. A sense of measure, a calm and pleasant moderation of forces, imposed the restraint of art on the apparent frenzy of color and rendered it more intimate and profound. In the diverse grace of their supple bodies and fair heads—one, the pale oval of whose face is shaded by ineffable melancholy, the other energetic and florid—the two young women press around the seated figure of the old mother: His strong, good mother, still so strong in the pain that is destroying her. [One sees] the great adoration of the son and the tirelessness of the model, who inspired some of his powerful paintings and sculpture."

The journalist Attilio Teglio interviewed Boccioni in March 1911, when the artist was already divesting himself of the Divisionist sensibility and was working on *The City Rises* (no. 50). Teglio noted: "He has heard himself praised for a work when he has already become detached from it, already gone beyond it. 'The Three Women!' they said to him, 'that's the path you must follow if you want to triumph.' 'But what path, what form, what triumph?' he replied. 'I always try newer, more difficult paths: My spirit is not uniform, it's multiform, and my work is generated by my spirit.'"

In a letter written from Pallanza around July 20, 1916, less than a month before his death, and addressed to his friend Vico Baer to whom the painting belonged, Boccioni seemed pleased with the interest shown in his work: "The marchesa di Casanova wants to come to Milan to visit your house and see my paintings. I took my album and the *Three Women* caused a furor!"

Three Women marks a moment of transition in the artist's work, the bridge from the suburbs of Milan to the idealistic vision of *The City Rises*. This painting is animated by an iridescent light like that produced by a prism. Here the light is depicted in slanting rays; in *The City Rises* it will explode in an unchecked swirling motion.

According to Calvesi (1967) there may be a relationship between Boccioni's luminism, in which light diffuses "immaterially like a wave in water," and Einstein's conception of the physical properties of light.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1910; Milan 1916–17, (ill., Collection Baer, Milan), no. 55; Milan 1924, no. 30 (Collection Baer, Milan); Milan 1933; Milan 1982–83, no. 48

LITERATURE: Corriere della Sera 1910; Giarratana 1910; Teglio 1911; Sarfatti 1916, p. 12 (*Le tre donne*, first version); Emporium 1917, p. 77; Sarfatti 1917, p. 43; Luzzatto 1924; Sarfatti 1924; Calderini 1927, p. 148 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 10, p. 32 (Collection V. Baer, Milan); Calvesi 1958a; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 87; De Grada 1962, no. 41 (*Le amiche* [*Tre donne*]) (Collection Ruberl, Milan); Ballo 1964, no. 246; Calvesi 1967, p. 71; Bruno 1969, no. 102a; Perocco 1972, p. 114; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 455



42. *Self-Portrait*
Autoritratto 1910

Ink and watercolor on paper
10¼ × 8¾ in. (26 × 22.2 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: 21–1–910 Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This self-portrait once belonged to Ruggero Vasari, the Italian poet and playwright. In the early 1920s he moved to Berlin, where he spearheaded the Futurist movement and was the director of a gallery. In 1958, as a result of the interest shown by Piero Dorazio, he sold this pen drawing and a gouache study for *The Drinker* (no. 78) to the Winston collection (now Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York).

In a letter to Dorazio dated January 20, 1958, Vasari said that he had acquired the work in Berlin in 1922: "The picture came from a Futurist exhibition in Prague. I don't remember the name of the gallery. The picture was shown, along with other Italian Futurist ones, at the Neumann Gallery in Berlin, Kurfürstendamm 222."

The harsh and incisive strokes in this drawing recall earlier works of the artist, when his enthusiasm for Dürer inspired him to do numerous portraits. The line hollows out the volumes of the sharp, lean face, while the light infiltrates the surface areas, creating a dramatic feeling unrelated to the subject but indicative of Boccioni's search for pictorial contrasts.

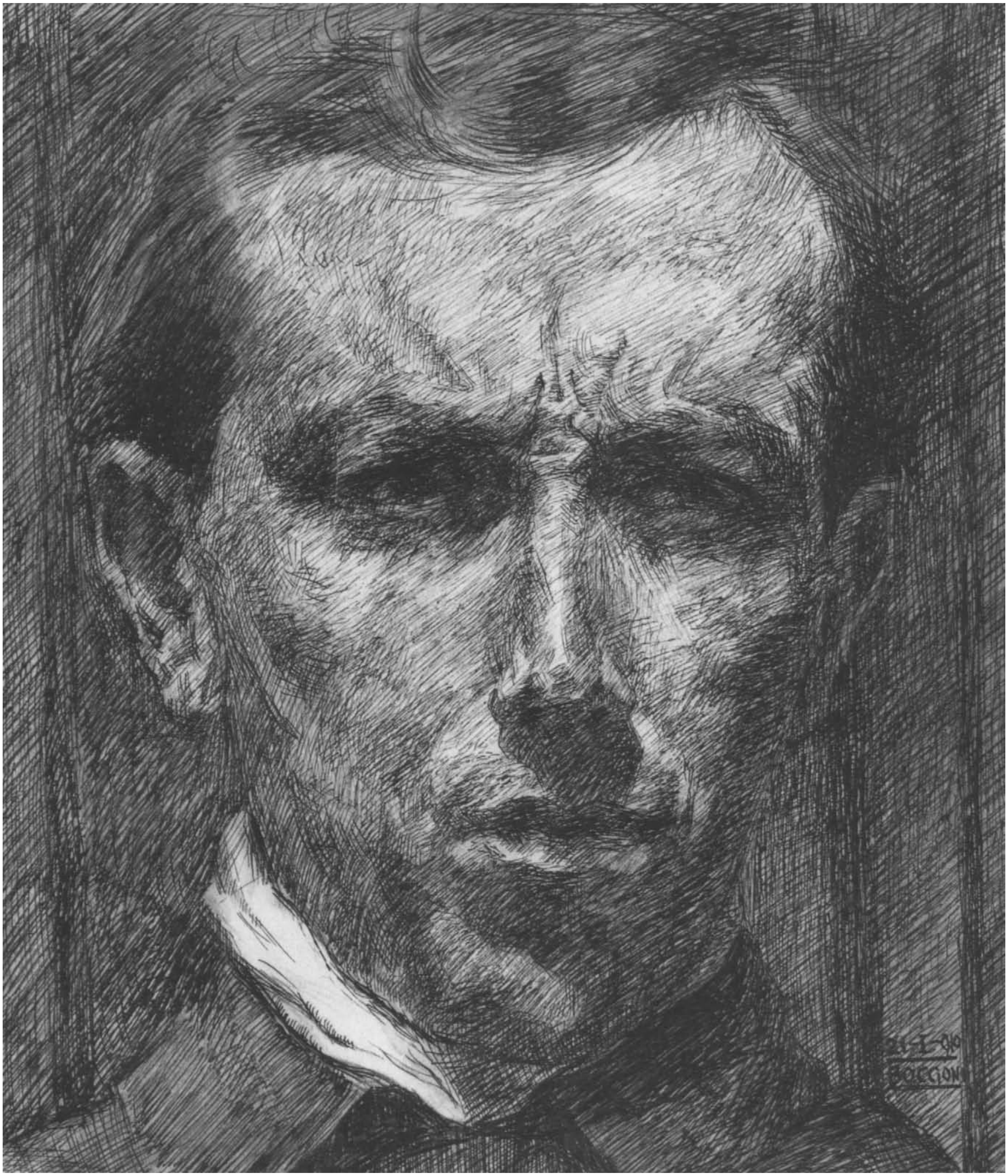
The dense strokes in the present work are related to Boccioni's renewed interest in engraving, which led him to take up etching again in early 1910.

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 139; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 73; Ballo 1964, no. 279 (26 × 22 cm., formerly Collection Vasari, Milazzo); Bruno 1969, no. 109; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 459

43. *The Gamboloita Bridge*
Ponte di Gamboloita 1910

Charcoal and ink on paper
10⅞ × 9⅜ in. (27.6 × 23.8 cm.)
Signed center right: Boccioni; inscribed: *Ponte di Gamboloita visto dalla linea ferroviaria—sufficientemente interessante. Mattina 28 maggio 1910. Abbastanza nuovo* (Gamboloita bridge seen from railway line—interesting enough. Morning May 28, 1910. Fairly new)
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This rapid sketch is interesting in its attempt to reproduce the sensation of movement. Here the representation of dynamic force is entrusted solely to the nimble stroke; the sequence of curvilinear waves conveys a feeling of displacement. This is one of Boccioni's

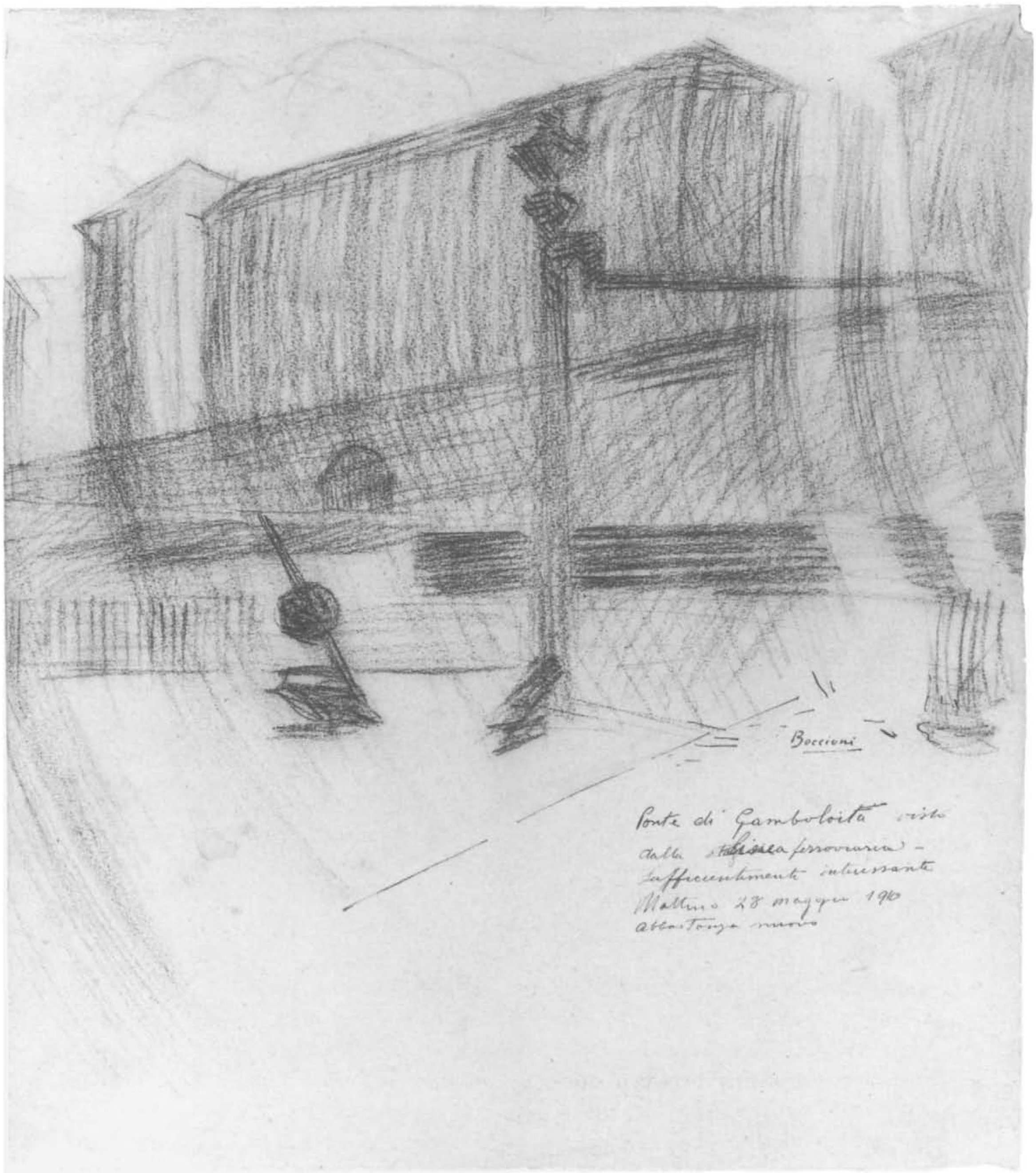


42

first works in which movement is described through line—a departure from the artist's practice of using color to embody the dynamic vibrations of light.

EXHIBITION: Milan 1916–17, no. 13 (*Ponte Gamboloita*)

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 112; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 181; Ballo 1964, no. 263 (pencil drawing); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 463



43

44. *Portrait of a Child with Dolls*
Ritratto di bambina fra le bambole 1910

Pencil on paper
19 × 13 in. (48.2 × 33 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: 1910 U. Boccioni
Private collection

This is one of a number of portraits and studies by Boccioni of Fiammetta, the daughter of Margherita Sarfatti, the critic and writer who was a great admirer of his work. Five other studies are known, four of them in the Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York, and one in a private collection. Two of these show the child standing, in profile and from the front, and both may be sketches for this drawing; three others show only the face of the curly-haired child and may also have been done in preparation for the upper part of this composition.

Because of its elaborate technique and complex subject, this drawing conveys the compositional and stylistic solidity more usually found in a painting. The child is surrounded by dolls and other toys; two stuffed animals—a horse and a rabbit—can be glimpsed in the confusion of the frayed and agitated strokes. The recurrent motif of the dolls' eyes, which form a vortex around the child's face, infuses the work with a dramatic sense of mystery and magic.

EXHIBITION: Reggio Calabria 1983, no. 184

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 30; Taylor 1961b, no. 140; Ballo 1964, no. 251; Bruno 1969, no. 129b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 478

45. *Young Woman Reading (Ines)*
Ritratto di donna 1908–1910

Charcoal, watercolor, and wax crayon on paper
18⅜ × 13⅛ in. (46.7 × 33.3 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This is most likely a portrait of Ines, the woman whom Boccioni had known since adolescence and who wrote him emotional letters, some of which, dated 1904 and sent from Bassano, have been found. Very little is known of this woman who played an important role in Boccioni's life; even her surname remains a mystery. In the painting *Three Women* (no. 41) Ines is depicted in the center between Boccioni's mother and sister; her expression is profoundly sad, and her melancholy gaze seems fixed on a remote dimension outside of reality.

Boccioni renewed his relationship with Ines in Milan: "Is she worthy of me? Often I think not, but often yes. Certainly her apathy is incomprehensible. She doesn't see me, she doesn't write me, she doesn't care to find out whether I'm dead or alive. . . . I'm really stupid! Anyway I won't go any more until I get a strong proof of her love. And I won't write anymore because I make myself laugh. Have I known her for ten or eleven years? I know everything! I've talked to her and discussed everything with her; I don't know any woman



44



45

as well as I know her. . . . and for me she's an enigma!" (diary, February 14, 1908). Boccioni appears to have had a rival for Ines; his feelings for her were in constant crisis, especially since Ines seems not to have embodied his ideals: "She's much inferior to what I dream of. Only her kindness and the fact that I've known her for so long bind me to her. But it's useless. I feel that it wouldn't take much to take my mind off her, and she provokes [this break] at every moment" (diary, March 23, 1908).

From 1908 to 1910 Boccioni often used Ines as a model, portraying her with an abstracted gaze or shrouded in sadness. In the present drawing the figure appears intent on reading a book; Boccioni has achieved a graphic skill that allows him to work with a few charcoal lines that blur or sharpen depending on the effects of light. The composition is interesting because of the low viewpoint, which gives a slight inclination to the figure, and the foreshortening, which frames the face, cropping the upper part of the hair.

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961a, p. 24 (ill., 1909–1910); Taylor 1961b, no. 136; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 39 (Collection Callegari-Boccioni: *Ines*); Ballo 1964, no. 286; Bruno 1969, no. 114 (*Busto di donna leggente/ Ritratto di giovane donna/Ines*); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 480

46A. *Study of a Man's Forearm* (recto) *Studio di avambraccio maschile* ca. 1908

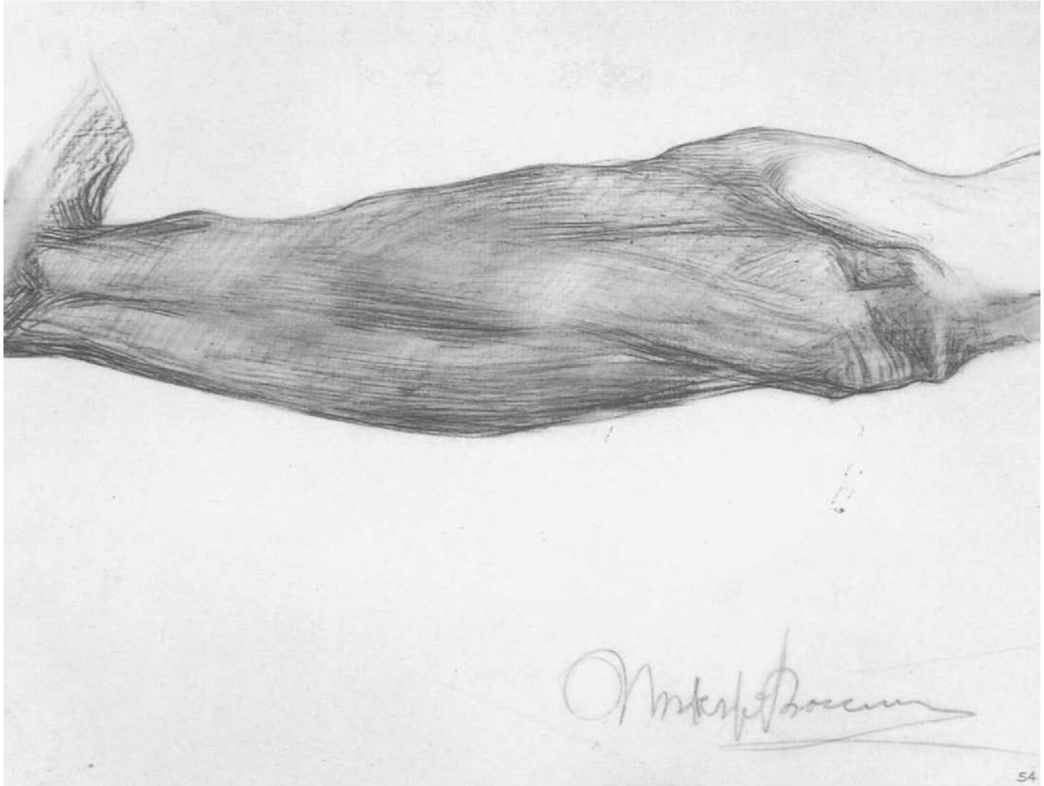
B. *Study of Extended Arms with Hands Clasped* (verso) *Studio di braccia tese con mani congiunte* ca. 1908

Pencil on paper
8¼ × 11⅝ in. (21 × 29.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): Umberto Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

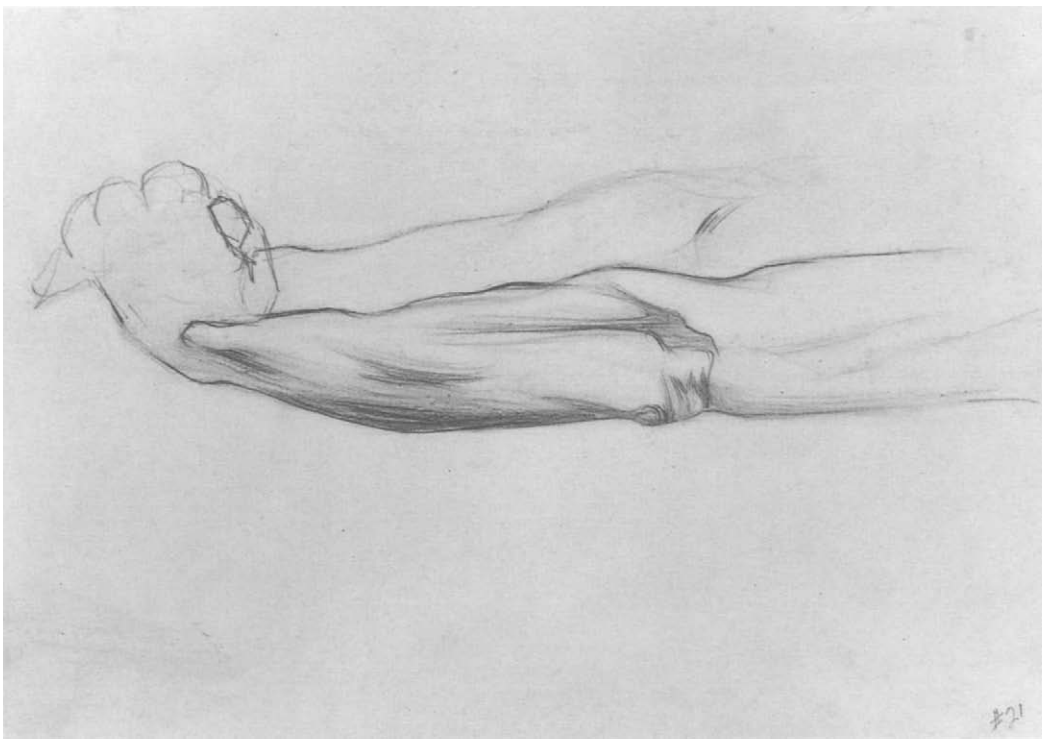
Boccioni did numerous anatomical studies around 1908–1909. It is difficult to assign a precise date to these studies; some are related to more complex works, while others were done simply as exercises. In the present drawings, which seem to derive from Michelangelo's anatomical studies, Boccioni meticulously rendered muscles, achieving a strength and tension that transcend simple description.

Careful analysis always characterized Boccioni's work. When he and Severini, Sironi, and Costantini were students at the Scuola Libera del Nudo in Rome, the young artist filled sketchbooks with impressions, notes, perspectives, foreshortenings, and academic nudes. Boccioni was to maintain this approach in the years that followed; even in his Futurist period, when his execution became very rapid, he continued to practice and to produce sketches and studies.

LITERATURE: No. 46A—Taylor 1961b, no. 27 (ca. 1907); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 165; Ballo 1964, no. 49 (1907); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 507
No. 46B—Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 508



46A



46B



47A



47B

47A. *Seated Male Nude* (recto)
Studio di nudo maschile ca. 1908

B. *Seated Woman with a Dark Blouse* (verso)
Studio di donna seduta con camiciotto scuro ca. 1908

Pencil on paper
15 × 10¼ in. (38.1 × 26 cm.)
Signed top right and bottom right (recto): UB and Boccioni
Signed bottom right (verso): UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

C. *Woman Leaning on a Chair (The Artist's Sister)*
Donna appoggiata ad una sedia ca. 1909

Pencil on paper
15¾ × 14⅝ in. (40 × 37.1 cm.)
Signed bottom center: UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

In these drawings Boccioni reduces the figures to unadorned lines, thus eliminating chiaroscuro. The nimble and fluent strokes, especially in the *Woman Leaning on a Chair*, describe the image sculpturally, stressing the volume and essence of the shapes. In *Seated Woman with a Dark Blouse* the contrast between figure and shadow (or chair) seems almost forced, but this dark background allows the sitter to emerge from the surface of the paper.

LITERATURE: No. 47A —Taylor 1961b, no. 97; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 163; Ballo 1964, no. 161; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 521
No. 47B —Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 518
No. 47C —Taylor 1961b, no. 68 (ca. 1909); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 149; Ballo 1964, no. 202 (1909); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 605



47C



48A

48A. *Study for "Mourning"*
Studio per Il lutto 1910

Ink on paper
6⅛ × 7⅜ in. (15.6 × 18.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

B. *Study for "Mourning"*
Studio per Il lutto 1910

Pencil, charcoal, blue and orange pencil, and gray wash on paper
9⅛ × 18⅜ in. (23.2 × 46.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

In a preparatory drawing (no. 48A) for *Mourning* Boccioni rapidly sketched a composition that suggests the Deposition from the Cross. The final composition of the painting is close to that of the drawing. The second study (no. 48B) is a sketch of the woman in the center of the painting (there a mass of fiery red hair surrounds her face, making it stand out like a grotesque mask). The linear style of this drawing is more closely related to the Symbolist movement than to Expressionist works.

The painting was exhibited for the first time at the Famiglia Artistica in late 1910. Argan (1953) noted the peculiarity of this work, which, just as Futurist ideas were being formulated, "deviates toward the tragic quality of Munch." This trait was also noted by Calvesi (1967), who stressed the relation between this tragic scene and the "themes explicitly symbolized [by the Norwegian master] in *Attraction*, *Anxiety*, *Melancholy*, and *Separation*."

EXHIBITIONS: No. 48A—New York 1961, no. 26
No. 48B—New York 1961, no. 24; New York 1973–74, no. 195

LITERATURE: No. 48A—Taylor 1961b, no. 165; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 228 (signed lower right: "Boccioni, *Odissea della Croce*"); Ballo 1964, no. 370; Martin 1968, no. 44; Bruno 1969, no. 120i; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 656
No. 48B—Taylor 1961b, no. 167; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 190; De Grada 1962, no. 57; Ballo 1964, no. 356; Ragghianti 1965, no. 5, p. 18; Bruno 1969, no. 120d; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 651



48B



49

49. *Riot in the Galleria*
Rissa in Galleria 1910

Oil on canvas
29⅞ × 25½ in. (76 × 64 cm.)
Signed top right: U. Boccioni
Pinacoteca di Brera (Emilio and Maria Jesi Gift), Milan

Some months before painting this picture, Boccioni had signed both the *Manifesto of the Futurist Painters* (February 11, 1910) and *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto* (April 11, 1910). In the April proclamation, which is more articulate and complex in its exposition of ideas than the rather schematic document of February, the Futurists stated: "Everything is in movement, everything rushes forward, everything is in constant swift change. A figure is never stable in front of us but is incessantly appearing and disappearing. Because images persist on the retina, things in movement multiply, change form, follow one upon the other like vibrations within the space they traverse.... We desire to take our place again in life itself. Today's science, rejecting its past, answers to the material needs of our time; art no less, rejecting its own past, should respond to the intellectual needs of our time. Our new awareness no longer lets us view man as the center of universal life. For us, a man's pain is interesting no less but no more than that of an electric bulb which, functioning, suffers and endures agonies and cries out in the most lacerating expressions of color; and the musicality of the line and folds of a modern garment have, for us, an emotional and symbolic power entirely like that the nude had for the old masters."

The whole poetic that would be expressed in the paintings of the Futurists is inherent in these words, although at the date the manifestos were signed, their theory was not freely expressed through color.

With *Riot in the Galleria* Boccioni began to confront new aesthetic concerns. The composition which is traversed by force-lines that converge in the center, is an early, summary statement of the theories he would later develop on dynamism, transcendentalism, simultaneity, and the compenetration of planes.

The *Technical Manifesto* also states: "Painting cannot subsist without *Divisionism*. Yet Divisionism, in our concept, is not a *technical means* that can be methodically learned and applied. Divisionism, for the modern painter, must be a *congenital complementarity*, something we judge essential and indispensable." Most of the works painted by Boccioni in 1910–11 show the influence of this statement on Divisionism. He returned to what had been his style for many years, accentuating the violence of primary colors in order to achieve dynamism. The present painting is, however, one of the first in which Boccioni experimented with a Pointillist brushstroke in the manner of Seurat, placing small areas of color tones next to each other and playing on a palette of complementary colors; his Pointillism had previously been linked more to late nineteenth-century Italian examples than to French ones. Here the color is transformed into light, a violent and artificial light refracted on the inside of the gallery; this illumination releases a charge of energy that triggers the strong radial movement of the crowd.

This painting was shown in late 1910 and early 1911 at the Famiglia Artistica in Milan under the title *Una baruffa* (*A Brawl*). The critic for *La Perseveranza* remarked: "*The Brawl* is set under an arcade near a café; the crowd runs, it gets excited, thereby exciting the shadows under the arc lamps." A painting by Boccioni entitled *Brawl* (Museum of Modern Art, New York) does exist, but it is obviously not the same painting described above.

In late 1916, at the Milan retrospective of Boccioni's works, the present painting was reproduced in the catalogue under the title *La Rissa* (*The Riot*). This title, however, does not appear in the exhibition checklist; it is therefore possible that *Baruffa in Galleria* (*Brawl in the Galleria*), listed as number 211, can be identified as this work. Various critics (Archivi del Futurismo 1962; Ballo 1964) have erro-

neously stated that the painting was exhibited at the Futurist shows that were held in Paris and other European cities beginning in February 1912.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1910–1911, no. 56 (*Baruffa*); Milan 1911 (*Baruffa*); Milan 1916–17 (ill.: *La rissa*; listed as no. 211 [*Baruffa in Galleria*][?]); Milan 1924, no. 10 (?)(*Rissa*); Venice 1952, p. 396, no. 51 (*La rissa in Galleria*, 1909); Rome 1953, no. 8; Rome 1959, no. 74; Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 25 (*La rissa in Galleria*); New York 1961, pp. 33, 142, no. 26; Venice 1966, p. 10, no. 33; Milan 1971, no. 574; Paris 1973, no. 9; Milan 1973–74, no. 39; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 14; Milan 1982–83, no. 58; Verona 1985–86, no. 75; Venice 1986, p. 110

LITERATURE: Perseveranza 1910; Carrà 1924, p. 3 (*La rissa davanti al Campari*); Carrieri 1950, p. 48; Ungaretti 1950, pl. 1; Valsecchi 1950 (1907?); Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 18; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, p. 264, no. 226 (*La rissa in Galleria*); De Grada 1962, pl. 10; Ragghianti 1962, p. 165, no. 365; Ballo 1964 (2d ed., 1982: cover), no. 369; Ragghianti 1965, sect. 64, no. 20, p.26; Bellonzi 1967, cover, pl. 53; Calvesi 1967, p. 48; Archivi del Divisionismo 1968, p. 197, no. 2457; Martin 1968, no. 49; Bruno 1969, no. 121a; Birolli 1971, p. 140; Kozloff 1973, no. 55; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 26, p. 40; Birolli 1983, no. 7; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 657; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 45, ill. 21; Crispolti 1986, p. 10, pl.7

50. *The City Rises*
La città sale 1910

Oil on canvas
78½ × 118½ in. (199.3 × 301 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1951), New York

Boccioni worked for almost a year on this painting, initially titled *Labor (Il lavoro)*, as we know from a long exchange of letters with his friend, the critic Nino Barbantini.

In a letter that can be dated to August or September 1910, Boccioni wrote that he had begun work on a painting intended to represent the modern epoch truly: "On Wednesday I began one picture measuring 2 by 3 meters and another two a little smaller than half of that. You see that something is really brewing: Let's hope for the best, and death to stick-in-the-mud-ism!" Late in the fall he wrote to Barbantini: "I am working hard. I have almost finished three works. A painting three meters by two in which I attempted a great synthesis of labor, light, and movement. It may well be a work of transition, and *I believe one of the last!* It is done completely without models, and all the tricks of the trade are sacrificed to the ultimate cause of emotional expression. . . . If I can do it (and I hope to) the emotion will be presented with as little recourse as possible to the objects that have given rise to it. The ideal, for me, would be a painter who, wishing to represent *sleep*, would not turn his mind to the creature (man, animal, etc.) sleeping but could, by means of lines and colors, bring out the *idea* of sleep, that is, sleep as something universal entirely beyond the mere chance factors of time and place. And this through purely pictorial sensations, that is, beautiful colors and beautiful forms . . . ."

In a letter dated 1910 and addressed to "*Mia cara malcontenta* (*eterna*)"—"My dear (eternal) malcontent," perhaps Ines, his longtime lover—Boccioni described the creative élan that was inducing him to retouch the picture, to add brushmarks here and there, and to modify parts already painted: "*Ciao cara!* Just a quick line because I have to go and do battle with my huge canvas. *Amore mio*, if it comes out as I think, the world has never seen anything like it! I am so immersed in it that it



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was fully drawn in an hour and a half. . . . What great leaps forward! I can say like Wagner to Sig. Frid: It comes out of all my pores! You can't imagine how different my way of feeling is now when I'm working. I feel as if I'm really creating something, and the work comes to me now with a fever—I don't know what to think of so many works of the past turned out in listless and discouraged moods. The way I am working now resembles the way I worked on only two or three works in my life. Now I understand the fever, passion, love, violence meant when one says to oneself: Create! But why wasn't it like this before? Maybe I really was like this, but sufferings and discouragements kept me pinned to earth. . . . Today unfortunately my leg hurts, but I hope to stretch it soon enough and to fling myself into work even more violently than yesterday. How I understand Marinetti's dictum: No work that lacks an aggressive character can be a masterwork!

"And it seems to me that my big picture is pretty much that. As always, working on a large scale, I expanded the original idea and the picture has become more full of figures, more violent than at first. The crowd has increased and I hope to put across in even the smallest figure that feeling of doggedly going ahead that crowds have when at work."

An interview by Attilio Teglio dated March 1911 and published in the Modena jour-

nal *Il Panaro* indicates that the painting had recently been finished. Teglio wrote that he saw "a grandiose, entirely spiritual composition" in Boccioni's studio "which no one knows as yet." He continued: "It is a picture of extremely vast dimensions that I cannot —because I do not know how to—describe: There are horses launched at mad speed, and men bent with effort, and movement and life and labor; a whirlwind of colors that gives the impression of noise and elements of all sorts that speak of the tumult of the city and, even more, of a man's thought."

On April 30, 1911, the Arte Libera exhibition opened in Milan, and the new painting was commented on in a number of reviews. The writer for the daily *Il Secolo* admired its originality: "Boccioni makes his mark again with more solid audacities in drawing and color. He has a dynamic style in tune with *fête* or *féerie*. Whether he shows us *The Roundup* . . . or *The Laugh* . . . or *Labor* with the city rising and the convulsive anxiety of the horses dragging loads and the trams that pass in a distant contour line and the workers sweating at their jobs or immersed in a blue cloud of dust, he always succeeds in giving us an extremely personal vision of art."

The article that must have cut the artist to the quick was doubtless the one by his friend Barbantini, who wrote in *L'Avvenire d'Italia* (May 19, 1911): "Among the recent works, an extremely large allegory of labor does not really prove convincing. It is neither very intriguing nor very eloquent, because the broad conception, which is carried out uncertainly and in an inadequate form, lacks clarity and organic cohesion. Perhaps the work was not sufficiently prepared and needed to be worked out in advance at greater depth and length, but even after examining its preparatory studies I am induced to believe that by and large it is not in accord with Boccioni's character to persist in symbolic painting."

The artist was quick to retort in a letter to Barbantini: "I could and would like to discuss with you at length what you say about persisting in symbolic painting. Am I right in thinking that you are not absolutely questioning my sincerity in producing a work which in one form or another I meditated over for four years? Granted that point, I would say to you that the only defect in the picture *Labor* is a slight insistence on realistic details in a work which is entirely a mental vision that grew out of reality. Therefore it is not my symbolic tendency that should be condemned but the particular work which may have failed.

"Yet here again, however, I do not hesitate to say that a picture of such dimensions, inspired by such a pure purpose as that of erecting a new altar to modern life vibrant with dynamism, one no less pure and exalting than those raised out of religious contemplation of the divine mystery—a picture that attempts this is infinitely superior to any sort of more or less objective reproduction of real life.

"One can always draw one's own conclusions with a certain skepticism about all the mental constructions of the philosophers, but be that as it may, when I think of a man who, selecting and proceeding from certain prime elements or premises which are his own inner light, his own intuition, and who on that basis, with a pride verging on madness, with an iron-firm law that is simply terrifying, attempts to construct a system, a world, whatever the end result may be of such a work fatally destined to be beaten down to naught in the course of time—I admire him! I admire him always and even if the whole lot of it leads only to the man's breaking his own neck! One needs to forgive an occasional error and occasional unsureness in a man who is trying to fly!

"I have said this because your article has stirred up again certain by now almost placated objections to my realism symbolism objectivism subjectivism and similar isms that mean nothing whatsoever when one needs to work, to liberate oneself from an idea by creating it."

In 1912 *The City Rises* was shown throughout Europe in the exhibitions organized to introduce the Futurist's new art. A review of the Paris showing, published in *Gil Blas* (Feb-

ruary 7, 1912) and signed Georges-Michel, struck a skeptical and ironic note. The author reports on his conversation with Severini who escorted him on his visit to the exhibition and tried to make him understand the paintings; his comment is flippant and sarcastic: "And here we have an interesting picture. Oh Cubists, insignificant *pompiers*! Cézanne, old fogey! Van Gogh or Van Dongen, shameful stick-in-the-muds! Monet, Renoir, Manet, phantoms of the past... Vanish! Even your fiery spirit, Oh De Groux, is melancholy compared with this horse red as hell itself which is dragged along by human serpents togged out as ditchdiggers and which, in a puff, make palaces rise tall."

After the showing at the Sackville Gallery in London in March 1912, the exhibition moved to Berlin. On April 13, the day after the opening in Berlin, Boccioni wrote to Barbantini: "The great pianist Busoni, who has been living in Berlin for many years, bought in London my picture *La ville monte* which I called in Italian *Il lavoro*. He paid 4,000 lire, of which 3,000 net came to me." Even after the canvas was sold, it continued to make the rounds of the European exhibitions and is listed in the catalogues from Berlin ("Besitzer: Professor Ferruccio Busoni") and Brussels ("Vendu au Maestro F. Busoni"). It was shown in the latter city from May 20 to June 1 in the Galerie Georges Giroux. In a letter to Herwarth Walden, director of Der Sturm, a Berlin gallery, Boccioni asked to have the picture photographed: "We forgot to have my picture *La ville monte* photographed while I was in Berlin. You know that I am making an album of photographs of all of my works. I absolutely need this. You must do me the favor of having it photographed right away *at my expense*. The size of the photograph should be 24×18 centimeters. *I beg you, do not make them smaller.*"

Boccioni's letters as well as others' testimony show how thoroughly he worked out his theories before beginning the painting. In a diary entry of March 14, 1907, he wrote: "With what is this to be done? With color? Or with drawing? With painting? With realistic tendencies that no longer satisfy me, with symbolist tendencies that please me in few artists and that I have never attempted? With an idealism that attracts me and that I do not know how to put into concrete form?"

For all Boccioni's revolutionary proposals and his deep-seated desire to move beyond Symbolism, *The City Rises* is nonetheless deeply immersed in that approach. A violent painting, it is whipped into an unbridled dynamic motion by the red horse in the foreground. The gigantic steed, whose collar metamorphoses into a blue propeller blade slashing the air, throws the entire space into turmoil in its swift and irresistible onrush. Set before us is nothing less than a glorification of animal force while at the same time the man-made industrial city rises up in the background in frenetic acceleration.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1911; Paris, 1912, no. 6 (*La ville monte*); London 1912, no. 6 (*The Rising City*); Berlin 1912, no. 6 (*Die erwachende Stadt*); Brussels 1912, no. 6 (*La ville monte*); Milan 1916–17, no. 70 (*La città sale*); Milan 1933; Paris 1935, p. 92, no. 3; Winterthur 1959, no. 9; New York 1961, no. 30; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, no. 2, p. 9; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 8, p. 17; Venice 1986, p. 119

LITERATURE: Teglio 1911; Secolo 1911; Barbantini 1911; Soffici 1911; Georges-Michel 1912; Boccioni 1914, p. 458, no. 6; Ambrosiano 1924; Buzzi 1924; Carrieri 1950, pl. 19, pp. 19, 45; Sironi and Zervos 1950, p.12; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 15, p. 34; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 154–55; Calvesi 1958b, p. 414; Calvesi 1959, p. 24; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 216 (signed lower left; damaged 1960 in a fire at the Museum of Modern Art, New York); Rosenblum 1962, no. 124, pp. 180-81; De Grada 1962, p. 83; Ballo 1964, no. 346, pp. 194–222; Ragghianti 1965, no. 3, p. 16; Calvesi 1967, pp. 68–72, pp. 104–5; Martin 1968, no. 52; Bruno 1969, no. 119a; Kozloff 1973, no. 56; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 25; Del Guercio 1980, p. 28; Tallarico 1982, p. 62; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 675; Crispolti 1986, p. 4

51. Studies for "The City Rises"

A. *Giants and Pygmies*
Giganti e pigmei 1910

Pencil on paper
12¼ × 25¼ in. (31 × 64 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Museo Civico di Torino—Galleria d'Arte Moderna
(Gift of Benedetto Fiore), Turin

B. *Study for "The City Rises"* (recto)
Studio per La città sale 1910
C. *Unidentifiable subject (horse in motion)* (verso)

Pencil on paper
3⅞ × 6 in. (9.8 × 15.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

D. *Three Horses Tended by Men; Stone Pavement* (recto)
Cavalli sul selciato 1910
E. *Horses and Figures in a Landscape* (verso)
Cavalli e figure 1910

Ink on paper
4½ × 6¼ in. (11.4 × 15.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right (verso): Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

F. *Man Leading a Horse* (recto)
Uomo con cavallo 1910
G. *Study of a Man* (verso)
Studio d'uomo 1910

Recto: pencil on paper
Verso: pencil and crayon on paper
4½ × 7 in. (11.4 × 17.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): Boccioni
Signed bottom left (verso): UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

H. *Study for "The City Rises"*
Studio per La città sale 1910

Pencil on paper
5½ × 8¼ in. (14 × 21 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

I. *Study for "The City Rises"*
Studio per La città sale 1910

Tempera on wood
6⅞ × 12 in. (17.5 × 30.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

J. *Study for "The City Rises"*
Bozzetto per La città sale 1910

Pencil on paper
22½ × 33½ in. (57.2 × 85.1 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: 1910 U. Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund), New York

K. *Sheet of Studies including two composition sketches for "The City Rises" and two for a scene of an urban crowd* (recto)
Studi di folla 1910

L. *Group of figures related to scene of an urban crowd* (verso)
Gruppo di persone 1910

Pencil on paper
5½ × 7⅛ in. (14 × 18.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

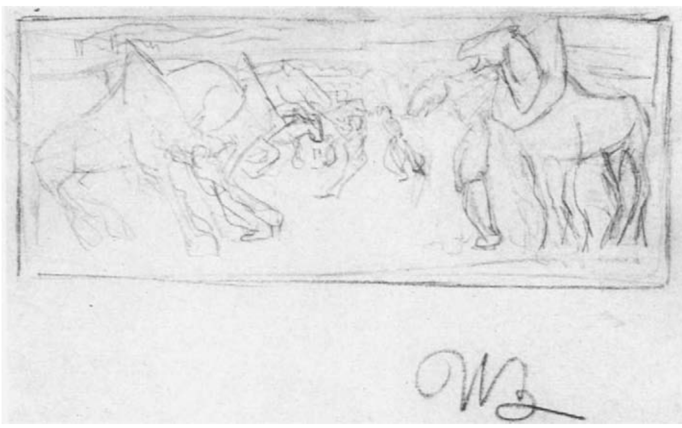
This series of studies, sketches, and preparatory drawings shows how much Boccioni modified and perfected his composition of *The City Rises*. The first work—*Giants and Pygmies*—is constructed as a triptych with a tree in the left compartment to symbolize Nature (or *Dawn* as that compartment is labeled in another pen sketch). The central image—horses dragged along by workmen—would be developed further in the painting to represent *Work* (or, as in some pen sketches, *Day*). At the right is a huge telescope or some other sort of astronomical instrument that may stand for the technological advances of modern times or, more specifically, *Night*.

The horse that is dragged along by human force was transformed through numerous experiments—either rapid jottings or meticulous sketches. It initially appeared in recognizable animal form, but it was subsequently enlarged and its appearance modified to make a monstrous vortex of energy. The sketch (no. 51J) in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, offers a complete version of the composition rendered in chiaroscuro as if to simulate the vibrations of color in the definitive canvas. However, since that drawing lacks the horse with the blue bladelike projection (between the huge steed in the foreground and the building under construction at the right), it may have been created after the canvas rather than before.

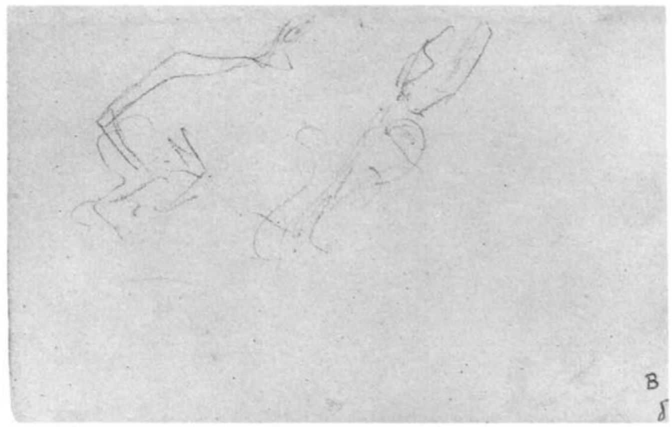
In various oil studies Boccioni experimented with shifting the waves of color to different tonalities, ranging from pure colors to less brilliant tints. In all those studies the vibrations are rendered by slanting brushstrokes of variable length and thickness which are



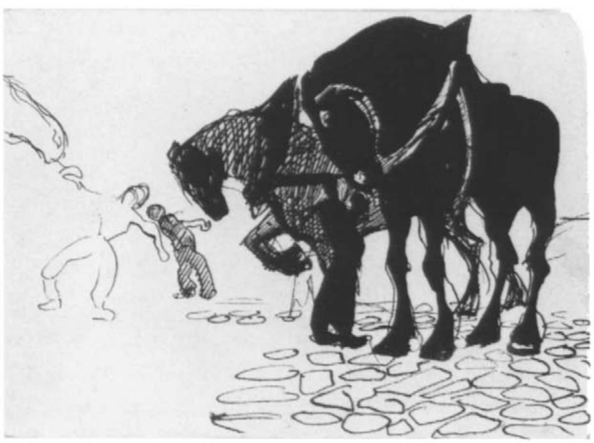
51A



51B



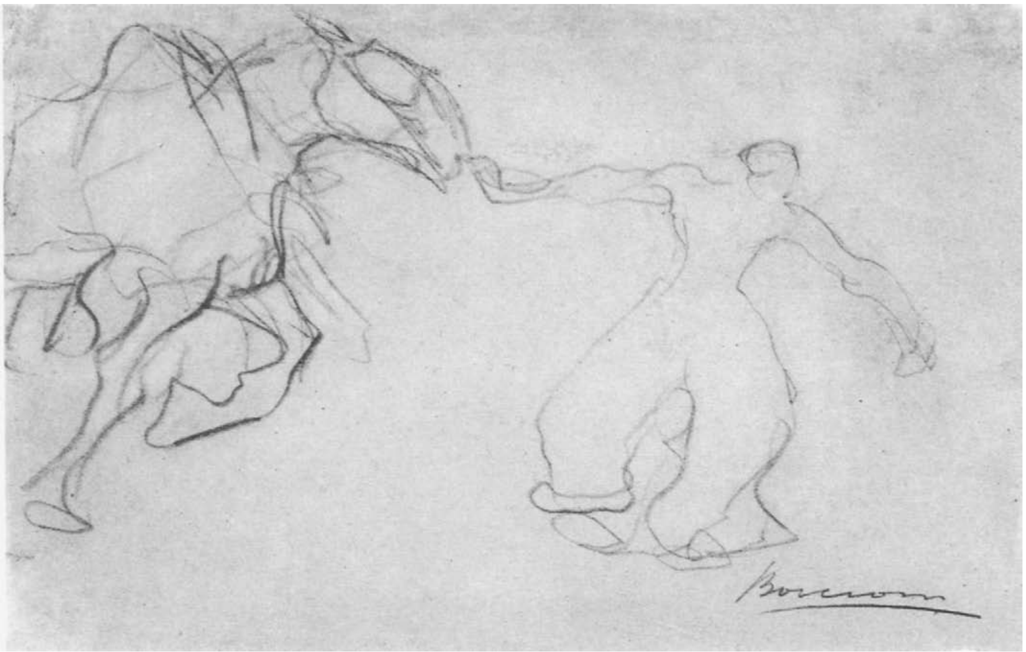
51C



51D



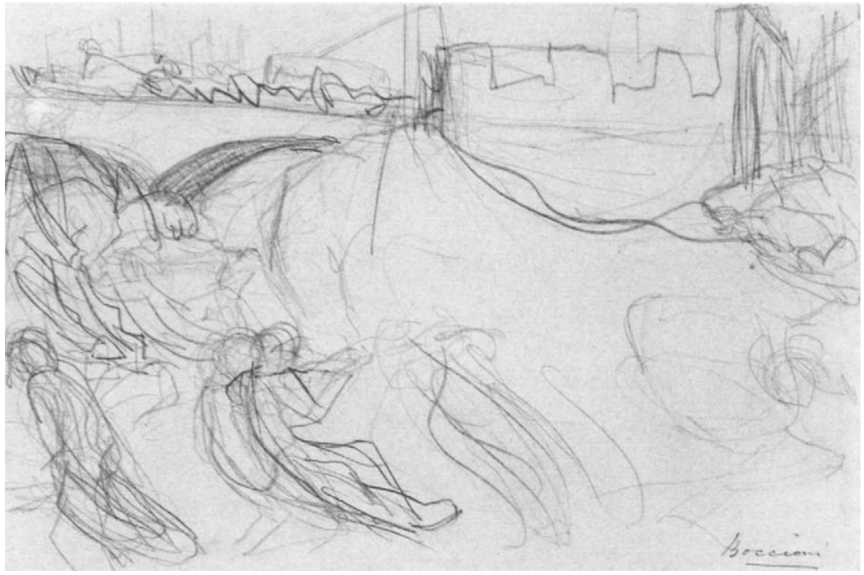
51E



51F



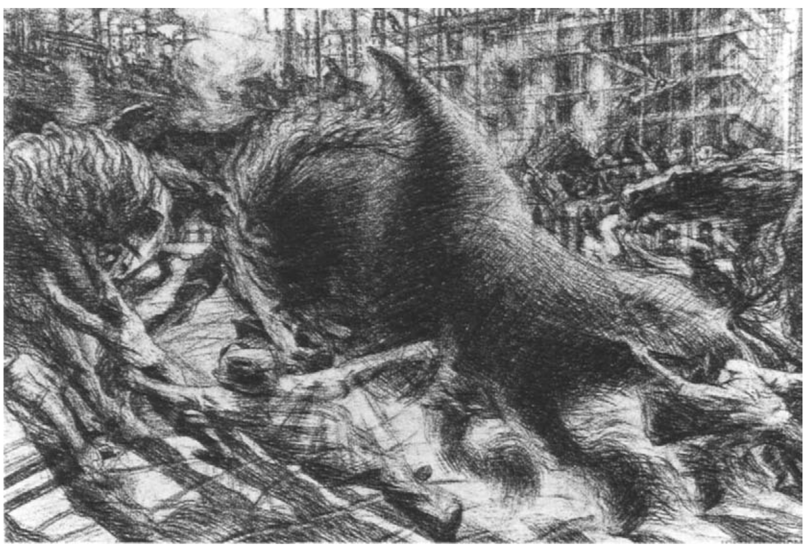
51G



51H



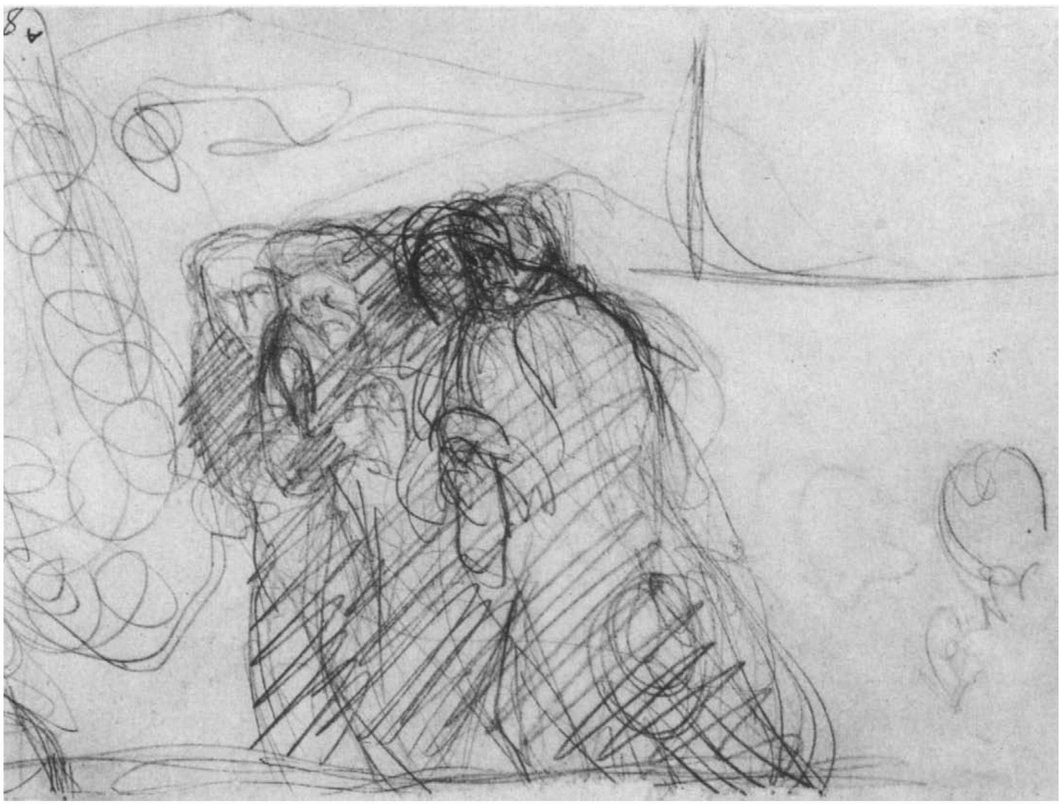
51I



51J



51K



51L

directly involved in the motion and, indeed, serve to emphasize the dynamic propulsion which is so central a feature of the work.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 51A—Milan 1982–83, no. 54
Nos. 51B, C—Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 23
No. 51H—New York 1973–74, no. 188
Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 22; New Haven 1983, no. 24, p. 42
No. 51I—Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 12; Venice, 1986, p. 118 (1910–11)
No. 51J—New York 1949; New York 1961, no. 27; Paris 1973, no. 11
Nos. 51K, L—Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 24

LITERATURE: No. 51A—Ballo 1964, no. 335, p. 223; Bruno 1969, no. 117a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 672
No. 51B, C—Taylor 1961a, p. 35 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 161; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 222 (*Scena di cavalli*); Ballo 1964, no. 334; Bruno 1969, no. 119d; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 677
No. 51D—Taylor 1961b, no. 158; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 198; De Grada 1962, no. 55 (*Tre cavalli e uomini sul selciato*); Ballo 1964, no. 347; Bruno 1969 (in the margin at no. 116); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 668
No. 51E—Taylor 1961b, no. 158a; Ballo 1964, no. 321; Bruno 1969 (in the margin at no. 116); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 667
No. 51F—Taylor 1961b, no. 159; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 201; Ballo 1964, no. 330; Bruno 1969 (in the margin at no. 116); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 669
No. 51G—Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 670
No. 51H—Taylor 1961a, p. 35 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 162; Ballo 1964, no. 324; Bruno 1969, no. 119b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 676
No. 51I—Calvesi 1958b, p. 414; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 221; Ballo 1964, no. 342; Bruno 1969, no. 119g; Perocco 1972, p. 117; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 680
No. 51J—Costantini 1933, p. 130; Taylor 1961b, no. 164; De Grada 196, no. 60; Ballo 1964, no. 345; Bruno 1969, no. 119j; Calvesi 1973, no. 21; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 684
No. 51K—Taylor 1961b, no. 163; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 230; Ballo 1964, no. 312; Bruno 1969, no. 115c (recto of no. 115b); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 720
No. 51L—Taylor 1961b, no. 163a; Ballo 1964, no. 313; Bruno 1969, no. 115b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 721

52. *Study for "The Riot"* *Studio per Baruffa* 1910

Pencil on paper
6⅛ × 6⅛ in. (15.6 × 15.6 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Although its general plan resembles that of *Riot in the Galleria* (no. 49), this study is the preparatory drawing for another painting of 1910, *The Riot (La Baruffa)*, formerly in the H. N. Rothschild collection and now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. That canvas itself closely follows the compositional scheme of another painting, *The Roundup*, all trace of which has been lost since 1913 when it was shown in Rotterdam as the property of Monsieur Lépine, prefect of police of Paris, who had acquired it through the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune.

In *The Riot* all naturalism is discarded in favor of Expressionist linear abstraction. The composition is resolved into a schematization of lines, and the brushwork and color are more vigorous and vibrant than in *Riot in the Galleria*.

The sketch for *The Riot* is less abstracted and terse than the painting, and the realistic details of the image can still be made out. The drawing has two large streetlights in the center; in the painting these are absorbed into a single light source in the upper center which is so brilliant as to overwhelm the lesser glow of the other two lamps. In the painting the mass of people is a formless and undefined tangle, whereas here one can still perceive individual figures.

EXHIBITIONS: New York 1973–74, no. 199; New Haven 1983, no. 21, p. 33

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 178; De Grada 1962, no. 62 (1911); Ballo 1964, no. 373 (1911); Bruno 1969, no. 124f; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 687



52



53

53. *The Laugh*
La risata 1911

Oil on canvas
43⅜ × 57⅛ in. (110.2 × 145.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, 1959), New York

The Laugh is one of the first of Boccioni's works that can be called Futurist. It dates from the period of full artistic maturity in which Boccioni finally parted company with Divisionism and formulated a new Futurist poetic rooted in the study of sensations derived from observation of modern life.

When the picture was shown in the spring of 1911 at the Arte Libera exhibition in Milan, critics commented favorably or, more often, unfavorably on the artist's "audacity": "The person who painted *Three Women* and *Twilight* should not let himself fall into the nastinesses of *Mourning* and *Laugh*" (*Corriere della Sera*); "Umberto Boccioni affirms himself anew with more solid audacities of drawing and color [in] *The Laugh*, with its unabashedly bold and impetuous colors that fuse in a strident orchestra of harmonies" (*Il Secolo*).

The painting was defaced by a visitor to the exhibition, an episode that has given rise to a number of hypotheses about the ways in which it was damaged and in which it was repaired or repainted. Among Boccioni's papers is what seems to be a draft of a telegram to be sent to the "Poeta Marinetti Teatro Fenice Venezia," which reads: "Unknown cowards have defaced picture The Laugh by Umberto Boccioni—Numerous artists also adversaries highly indignant—Walls in our hall getting covered with insults—Undaunted we are continuing battle sending you wishes of victory for yours—Speak about it in lecture—Carrà Russolo Datta Cavacchioli Buzzi Cinti."

The laconic note does not specify either how the canvas was ruined or the extent of the damage. Some information however can be gleaned from an article about the exhibition published in the newspaper *La Perseveranza* on May 7, 1911, which reported that a visitor, commenting ironically on the artistic freedom propagandized by the exhibitors, ran his finger over the still-fresh paint: "We are in the Futurists' hall, at the Arte Libera exhibition, in the former headquarters of the Ricordi Company. Two citizens are admiring a picture with violent splashes of bright red.

"'The art of painting could not be more free than this.'

"'Oh no, it could be even more so . . . like this.' And a finger stretches out to the red splashes, still fresh, and then streaks over the canvas making squiggles and arabesques. 'There you are,' he observes, 'the picture is more complete now, or at least it is more pleasing to my own artistic freedom.'

"And, modest in such great glory, he goes on his way not even asking compensation from the painter for whom he has finished up the violent contrasts of the Futurist canvas. It is said that F. T. Marinetti is looking for the unknown disciple in order to dedicate a book to him. And looking for him too is the 'retouched' painter Boccioni, in order to put into practice that part of the Futurist doctrine that has to do with the fist and the slap in the face."

This article would seem to show that the canvas was not slashed with a razor blade as stated by Ballo (1964) but was merely damaged superficially in the lower part (since the article mentions the color red) where the paint was not entirely dry. It can therefore be deduced that the picture was finished just before it was put on exhibit. From Boccioni's letters to Nino Barbantini in the summer and winter of 1910, and from an interview with the artist in March 1911, it would appear that he worked on other canvases when he was painting *The City Rises*, but it seems improbable that *The Laugh* was finished before the spring of 1911, a hypothesis proposed by Calvesi in 1958.

Some authorities affirm that the picture was completely repainted in the fall of 1911, several months after being damaged, in a "Cubist" manner that gave it a rather more modern look before it was put on view again, in its present form, in the Futurist exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris.

Ragghianti (1962) proposed a reconstruction of the original on the basis of the preparatory sketches. He uses as his authority the statement Marinetti made in his lecture at the Teatro Fenice in Venice on May 7, after receiving the telegram mentioned above. "Leaving aside the additions laid over it," Ragghianti writes, "the original scene included three very vulgar cocottes or 'kept women.' One is still almost fully visible at the left, flinging herself backward in laughter, with hands bejeweled with serpents clasped across her breasts. One, seen from the back in the center foreground, has a bright red wide-sleeved dress and flame-like hair (she once wore a startling round plumed hat); she raises her forearms to either side and gesticulates as if pronouncing the *bon mot cochon* at the end of the dinner. And finally there is one, a part of whose profile remains at the right, who is laughing and putting a cigarette to her mouth 'red as a wound.' With them, three men . . . in jackets and white waistcoats: One at the left, sprawling on . . . his chair, looks like the famous American banker Morgan (and whose head was echoed by one in front of him); another at the right, his elbow on the table, lights a cigarette from the flame of a match; and the third at the top, mustached like the first, leans toward the laughing woman. To judge by the Thonet chairs and the elaborately set table, the little supper *en séparé* was not out-of-doors, and it is certainly illuminated by electric light. . . . The reworking preserved the preceding plan on the whole: However it was STABBED (to put it Futuristically) by an increasing series of diagonal wedges . . . from the right upward, whereas the original composition was oriented from the right downward. These wedges are given concrete form in small café tables that . . . transform the setting by [presenting a] multiplicity of figures in profile, front view, rear view, men young and old and women with huge feathered hats. . . . In place of the large round plumed hat of the woman in the center foreground—which was the most novel and audacious feature of the first version and was thus the pivotal shape around which the entire figurative composition was distributed, echoed by the violet-red hat of the laughing woman opposite—Boccioni introduced one of those lanterns of relatively enormous size whose globe, metallic with luminous perforations, became the most prominent element, the one with immediate impact on the viewer. [This] superimposition did not really alter the structure of the original composition, [since the artist] maintained the relation of oblique and continuous projection between the sphere and the laughing woman's figure inscribed within the semicircle. Final insertions: the plates beneath the concave hands . . . , the brilliantly shining still life fitted onto the top of the lamp, glasses in profile and cross-section, the siphon bottle brilliant and decomposed within the cone of light. The painterly treatment . . . is marked by a fleet and supple use of color in the Secessionist manner; there are Divisionist and Pointillist traits in the parts of the original version that remained almost intact (i.e., the figure of the laughing woman, the red silk dress with all its frills and furbelows . . . , and some more realistic parts of the men's heads and clothing). In the later additions [the treatment] becomes heavier and also tends to break up in impastos of more vehement Divisionism to bituminous agglomerations, from greenish chiaroscuros to dense masses disturbed by emphatic drawing; the discrepancy [between the repainting and the original] becomes noticeable, even pronounced, and increases the impression of dispersion that has been created in the now-overburdened picture despite a very complex maneuver to tie it together and recompose it. The redundancy and intersection of the numerous directional lines . . . increases the impression of extreme fragmentation; in comparison, in terms of the swiftness and impetus of the overall image the first *Laugh* was certainly more concise and instantaneous in impact even if, objectively, poorer, more superficial."

As early as 1958 Calvesi hypothesized with caution that the canvas may have been entirely redone because of the presence of Cubist-type solutions, particularly in the background (nine years later however he was inclined to reject this idea).

Taylor (1961) also postulated that the work was painted from scratch on a new canvas: "Doubtless these rolling, boisterous forms were much more in evidence in the painting when it was first shown than in its present form. Marinetti mentioned later in the year that the painting had been slashed by some unconvinced visitors to the Milan exhibition. Evidently Boccioni recreated the work on new canvas, taking the opportunity to add the angular forms and 'cubist' bottles and glasses that have no place in the original sketches nor in carrying out his stated expressive theory. Probably the revised version was made late in 1911 after his return from a hasty viewing in Paris of the recent works of Picasso and Braque and his friend Severini."

This hypothesis was championed by Ballo in 1964: "The picture as seen today... was undoubtedly repainted after the defacement at the exhibition by a razor blade wielded by an unknown visitor. On his return from Paris in the fall, Boccioni took it in hand again to rework it with the Cubist method. Severini —in front of *The Laugh* and the *States of Mind* in the show of Italian works in American collections (June 1960, Palazzo Reale, Milan)— assured me that Boccioni, after his trip to Paris in the fall of 1911, had redone in a Cubist key various works intended for the exhibition at Bernheim-Jeune's."

One of the more interesting reviews of the initial showing at the Arte Libera exhibition in Milan was that of Nino Barbantini in *L'Avvenire d'Italia*, especially in view of the friendship between artist and critic: "One of these pictures (*The Laugh*) depicts a group of light women and *viveurs* in very lively conversation around a café table while one of the women, all of whom are dressed bizarrely, breaks out into uproarious laughter which is taken up by the others. The scene is viewed with acute penetration and represented in painting of irresistible effectiveness: The effect is in large part due to the violence of the coloring, to the dazzling juxtaposition of extremely strong and luminous tones. In the center of the group an enormous yellow feather seems a veritable spray of fireworks."

Barbantini's description can be taken as conclusive evidence that the general organization of the work was not changed nor was the coloring made more brilliant and aggressive. It can be supposed, nevertheless, that Boccioni returned to the finished canvas and superimposed on the original surface a number of lines and objects—for example, repeating the table or adding the glasses—with further additions that do not so much recall the Cubist manner as represent his own first approach to the problem of compenetration of subject and setting.

Although Barbantini criticized Boccioni's other picture in this exhibition, *The City Rises* (no. 50), for its lack of clarity and organic cohesion as well as too overtly symbolistic references, he admired *The Laugh*, especially for its use of color. Thus already in its first showing and presumed first version the colors played the key part in constructing the image. It is nonetheless likely that after his return from Paris in November 1911 the artist did retouch the painting and add elements to intermix the planes and to fuse—and confuse—the perspective and contours.

When *The Laugh* was shown in London in March 1912 Boccioni himself supplied a description for the catalogue which, as translated for that purpose, read: "The scene is round the table of a restaurant where all are gay. The personages are studied from all sides and both the objects in front and those at the back are to be seen, all these being present in the painter's memory, so that the principle of the Roentgen rays is applied to the picture."

As Martin (1968) suggests, the preponderant influence on this type of synthetic vision would seem to be the theories of Henri Bergson rather than the Cubists' system, and indeed one cannot help suspecting that Boccioni was indulging in a subtle criticism of Cubism in this canvas, especially as regards the volumetric decomposition of forms.

The picture was not shown in the Futurist exhibition in Rotterdam in the summer of 1913, having been sold in the spring of 1912 when it was exhibited at the Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin. It, along with some twenty other

Futurist works, was acquired by Wolfgang Borchardt, the German collector, whom Boccioni described in a letter (May 29, 1912) to Luigi Russolo as "a rich man but a little spendthrift; so he can very well pay up but can also run into debt. This gentleman always invites us to the most sumptuous meals in the most aristocratic club in Berlin."

The picture reappeared in 1931 when a Mr. W. A. Sinclair wrote from Kassel, Germany, to Benito Mussolini (July 30, 1931; ACS, Presidenza Consiglio dei Ministri 1931–33, fasc. 2207) to propose that the Italian government purchase it from him: "I have the temerity to write to you about the picture *Laughter*, the masterpiece of the father of Futurism Umberto Boccioni. It is difficult to exaggerate either the powerful beauty of this picture or its importance in the history of art, but circumstances compel me to dispose of my collection—at present on loan in the state gallery here—and I should be glad to know if you or any of the Italian galleries would consider purchasing it. Quite apart from my own necessity I feel this great work should find a resting place in Italy." The laconic reply was dated August 28, 1931: "This ministry regrets being unable to take the offer of Mr. W. A. Sinclair under consideration because the funds allocated in the budget do not offer the possibility of the proposed acquisition."

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1911; Paris 1912, no. 5, p. 26 (ill.: *Le rire*); London 1912, no. 5, p. 7 (ill. *Laughter*); Berlin 1912, no. 5, p. 7 (ill.); Brussels 1912, no. 5, p. 26 (ill.); Leipzig 1914 (cover illustration); Berlin 1917, no. 8 (*Das Lachen*); New York 1961, no. 33, p. 40; Milan 1973–74, no. 109; Paris 1980; Philadelphia 1980–81, p. 29; Milan 1982–83, no. 66; Venice 1986, p. 121

LITERATURE: Barbantini 1911; Corriere della Sera 1911; Perseveranza 1911; Secolo 1911; Soffici 1911; Boccioni 1914, p. 458; Dinamo Futurista 1933a; Carrieri 1950, pl. 21, p. 50 (1910); Pastonchi 1950, p. 38 (1912); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 26, pp. 26, 36; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 156–57, 169; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 248; De Grada 1962, fig. 66, p. 85; Ragghianti 1962, no. 364, pp. 154–57; Ballo 1964, no. 432, p. 228; Baumgarth 1964, no. 9, p. 181; Ragghianti 1964, no. 24; Calvesi 1967, pp. 68, 104, 258; Martin 1968, no. 59; Bruno 1969, no. 138a; Calvesi 1973 (see nos. 22–25); Kozloff 1973, no. 81; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 28, p. 41; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 701; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 61, ill. 27

54A. *Study for "The Laugh"*
Studio per La risata 1910-1911

Pencil on paper
4½×6 in. (11.4×15.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild), New York

B. *Study for "The Laugh"* (recto)
Studio per La risata 1911

C. *Man with Mustache* (verso)
Studio 1911

Pencil on paper
4⅜×6 in. (11.1×15.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right (recto): Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Although the second sketch is more rapid and summary than the first, it is closer in composition to the final painting. With figures disposed very much as in the finished work, this study is closest to the canvas itself and gives us the best idea of what *The Laugh* may have looked like before it was damaged and repainted. On the verso of the Malbin sheet there is a drawing of a mustached man, which is a first sketch for one of the male figures entertained by the two women's chatter.

LITERATURE: No. 54A—Taylor 1961b, no. 174; Ballo 1964, no. 429; Bruno 1969, no. 138c; Calvesi and Coen, 1983, no. 699
No. 54B—Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 700



54A



54B



54C

55A. *Modern Idol*
Idolo moderno 1911

Oil on wood
23½×23 in. (59.7×58.4 cm.)
Signed bottom left: U. Boccioni
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

B. *Study for "Modern Idol"*
Studio per Idolo moderno 1911

Pencil on paper
5¾×5⅝ in. (14.6×14.3 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

C. *Head of a Young Woman with a Large Hat*
Testa di donna 1911

Pencil on paper
4⅞×4 in. (12.4×10.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

"In order to conceive and comprehend the new beauties of a modern picture, the soul must become pure again, the eye must free itself of the veil cast over it by atavism and culture and consider the only controlling factor to be Nature, certainly not the Museum!

"Then at last everyone will become aware that it is not brown that courses beneath our epidermis but instead that yellow glows there, red blazes there, green and azure and violet dance there, voluptuous and inviting! How can one still view a human face as rosy pink when our new nocturnal life has given us, undeniably, a double life? The human face is yellow, is red, is green, is blue, is violet. The pallor of a woman eyeing a jeweler's showcase is more iridescent than all the prisms of the jewels that fascinate her.

"The possibilities we sense in paint cannot be simply murmured. We are making them sing and shout in our canvases which blast out triumphal fanfares.

"And that is why your eyes, so long accustomed to dusky dimness, will be opened to the most brilliant visions of light."

This excerpt from the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* dated April 11, 1910, and signed by Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Balla, and Severini, expounds one aspect of the program and aims of the recently formed group. In *Modern Idol* it seems as if Boccioni took the joint proclamation literally (he may very well have been its chief author or at least formulator) and transformed it into a concrete image. "Light effects upon the face of Woman" was the succinct description, probably contributed by the artist himself, of this painting in the catalogue of the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery, London, in March 1912. Beams of light shoot across the face and transform it into a spectral mask that takes on the colors of the night: The features are transfigured, the flesh itself becomes transparent to the reflections and iridescences that fractionate into all the colors of the spectrum. Yellows, reds, blues become violets, oranges,



55A



55B

greens, in accord with the laws of complementary colors and in accord also with the Divisionist technique Boccioni continued to cling to, even here where he was laying on his paint in a variety of touches and manners, trying the effect of different brushstrokes —shorter or longer, more sparing or thicker. As regards modes of feeling, however, it is the Expressionist approach that holds sway. The yellows and reds in the "idol's" hat radiate a luminous glow across and through the painting. Those colors are, in fact, the fulcrum of a picture fraught with mysterious force and cruel aggression.

For Calvesi (1958) the picture is based on Expressionism in the Munch manner, with direct references to the work of Toulouse-Lautrec and Seurat.

Although Ballo (1964) states that the canvas was shown in 1911 at the Arte Libera exhibition in Milan, none of the reviews mention it and no copy of the catalogue has been found to confirm this.

There are two quite different studies for the painting. One is more naturalistic, though the large hat is exactly as in the canvas. In the other the woman has staring, almost mad eyes, even more intense than the hallucinated gaze



55c

of the woman in the painting. Long pencil strokes sweep across much of the face accentuating, in the same way as the shadow of the hat in the painting the areas plunged in darkness, with only the chin struck directly by the glaring light.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 55A—Paris 1912, no. 8 (*Idole moderne*); London 1912, no. 8 (*A Modern Idol*); Berlin 1912, no. 8 (*Ein modernes Ideal*); Brussels 1912, no. 8 (*Idole moderne*); New York 1961, no. 32; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 13; Venice 1986, p. 120

LITERATURE: No. 55A—Rotterdam 1913; Boccioni 1914, p. 458, no. 8; Buzzi 1950, p. 28; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 17, p. 34 on temporary loan from the collection N. Urech Walden); Calvesi 1958a, p. 156; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 217 (oil on board); De Grada 1962, pl. 12 (signed lower left "Boccioni 1911"); Ballo 1964, no. 383, p. 228 (exhibited at the Mostra d'Arte Libera, Milan); Calvesi 1967, pp. 53, 72; Perocco 1972, p. 118; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 23; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 709; Crispolti 1986, p. 10

No. 55B—Taylor 1961b, no. 148; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 219; Ballo 1964, no. 382; Bruno 1969, no. 130b; Birolli 1971, p. 10; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 710

No. 55C—Taylor 1961b, no. 147; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 220; Ballo 1964, no. 384 (*Testa di giovane donna con grande cappello*); Bruno 1969, no. 130c; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 711

56. **States of Mind**

A. *States of Mind: The Farewells*
Gli addii—Stati d'animo II 1911

Oil on canvas
27⅞ × 37⅞ in. (70.8 × 96.2 cm.)
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979), New York

B. *States of Mind: Those Who Go*
Quelli che vanno—Stati d'animo II 1911

Oil on canvas
27¾ × 37⅞ in. (70.5 × 96.2 cm.)
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979), New York

C. *States of Mind: Those Who Stay*
Quelli che restano—Stati d'animo II 1911

Oil on canvas
27⅞ × 37⅞ in. (70.8 × 96.2 cm.)
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979), New York

D. *Study for "States of Mind: The Farewells"*
Studio per Gli addii—I 1911

Pencil on paper
19⅛ × 24 in. (48.5 × 61 cm.)
Signed bottom right: UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

E. *Study for "States of Mind: The Farewells"*
Studio per Gli addii—I 1911

Charcoal and chalk on paper
23 × 34 in. (58.4 × 86.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Vico Baer), New York

F. *Drawing After "States of Mind: The Farewells"*
Disegno da Gli addii 1912

Ink on paper
14 3/8 × 17 1/2 in. (36.6 × 44.4 cm.)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

G. *States of Mind: Those Who Go*
Quelli che vanno—Stati d'animo I 1911

Oil on canvas
28 × 37 3/4 in. (71 × 96 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: U. Boccioni 1911
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

H. *Study for "States of Mind: Those Who Go"*
Studio per Quelli che vanno 1911

Charcoal and chalk on paper
23 × 34 in. (58.4 × 86.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Vico Baer), New York

I. *Drawing After "States of Mind: Those Who Go"*
Disegno da Quelli che vanno 1912

Ink on paper
12 1/2 × 16 3/4 in. (31.8 × 42.5 cm.)
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

J. *Sketch for "States of Mind: Those Who Go"*
Bozzetto per Quelli che vanno 1911

Oil on canvas
37 3/4 × 47 1/2 in. (96 × 120.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

K. *Study for "States of Mind: Those Who Stay"*
Studio per Quelli che restano 1911

Charcoal and chalk on paper
23 × 34 in. (58.4 × 86.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of Vico Baer), New York

The earliest source of information about the *States of Mind* trilogy is an article Guillaume Apollinaire published in the *Mercure de France* on November 16, 1911, in which he reported on a recent encounter with Boccioni and Severini. Boccioni was in Paris at the time to arrange for an exhibition scheduled to take place in autumn but which had to be postponed to the following spring because Marinetti, the ringleader and stellar attraction, was at the Libyan front as a war correspondent. As Apollinaire told it, Boccioni said, "I have painted two pictures, one of which expresses departure and the other arrival. This takes place in a railroad station. *Eh bien!* to bring out the difference in feelings I have not put into my picture of arrival a single line found in the picture of departure."

These pictures, however, do not seem to correspond to the well-known versions of the *States of Mind* in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, but to an earlier one still strongly marked by an Expressionist approach (Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan).

After visiting Paris, Boccioni very likely took up again his idea of expressing feelings and sentiments in a work of art; this possibility was very much on his mind for some months, since he had begun work on the large canvas of *The City Rises* (no. 50). On his return he redid the *States of Mind* in a new version that was more modern, more "French." As Calvesi (1958) rightly pointed out, Boccioni must have rethought his conception of these works after he and the other Futurists were the target of a direct attack by Ardengo Soffici who was championing the Cubists in his review *La Voce* and, with such a partisan of French painting as Roger Allard for a mouthpiece, indirectly criticizing the Italians. Obviously Boccioni was therefore not entirely unacquainted with Cubism even before his visit to Paris, and he himself would imply as much in his *Pittura, scultura futuriste* of 1914: "We know Cubism in the form in which it was held up as our contrary in France in articles and books after we appeared with the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* (April 11, 1910) and our first exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim (February 6, 1912)."

In the same book Boccioni stated that he was already at work on the trilogy at the time of his lecture of May 29, 1911, at the Circolo Artistico in Rome: "Those three paintings that were exhibited throughout Europe already have a literature around them. Given the period in which they were conceived they still show some uncertainties, but they did define the nature of the vastness and infinite possibility of Futurist painting and sculpture. All those who have followed the way pointed to in these three works have liberated themselves from Cubist academic frigidity and, although persisting in the concept of pure painting, have been able to elevate it to the lyrical comprehension of the universal dynamism. Here is what I said in a stormy session in the face of almost general incredulity: 'If Watts said that he painted ideas, which simply came down to applying traditional forms and colors to purely literary and philosophical visions, we reply that we, relying on our state of mind, paint the *sensation* because we wish to remain, consistently, exclusively within the field of painting. In point of fact, in painting the *pure sensation* we pin down the plastic idea before it becomes localized in a particular direction and takes definitive form by one or another sensory repercussion (music, poetry, painting). We go all the way back to the first universal sensation that our spirit can already perceive thanks to the extremely intense synthesis of all the senses in a *universal whole* which will make us return, through and beyond our millennial complexity, to primordial simplicity. This means that we desire the subject to become one with the object.'" (The version quoted in the book, reproduced here, differs in some details from the text of the lecture; see p. 231.)

Another passage from that lecture further expounds the artist's thinking on this theme: "And so if solid bodies give rise to states of mind by means of vibrations of forms, then we will draw these vibrations. Velocity will thus be something more than an object in swift



56A

motion, and we will perceive it as such: We will draw and paint velocity by rendering the abstract lines that the object in its course has aroused in us. Every verification with the outside world must end up in the created work. The colors should not correspond with the objects because these latter are never themselves colored; this higher realism has generated this truth: If objects appear colored more or less according to the emotion that invests them, why not paint the *sensation* these variations arouse? The same can be said of forms: If an object never has a fixed form but varies according to the emotion of whoever contemplates it, why should we not draw, instead of the object, the rhythm aroused in us by that variation in dimensions?"

From Apollinaire's remarks as well as from the lecture in Rome, it is obvious that by 1911 Boccioni was perfectly clear about the ideas he was preparing to delve into more deeply. The changes in his canvases which he probably made after returning from Paris would therefore have affected the form but not the basic ideology.

When the "triptych" was shown for the first time in February 1912 at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, it was considered no more than an offshoot of Cubist art. The critic Vauxcelles wrote that "*The Specters* [*Les larves*] by M. Boccioni is a plain and simple markdown from Braque and Picasso." Apollinaire could not resist making sweepingly summary judgments: "Boccioni is above all under the influence of Picasso who dominates all new painting today, not only in Paris but throughout the world. . . . The exhibition of the Futurist painters will teach our young painters to be even bolder than they have been so far. Without such boldness the Futurists would never have dared exhibit their still very imperfect efforts. It will be useful to them also in measuring just how far they surpass their rivals in Italy and in all other nations."

For his part Boccioni seems to have brushed aside such comments in the press. From Paris, on February 12, he even wrote a letter of decidedly triumphant tone to his friend Barbantini: "The entire battle took its character from my *States of Mind* which are being talked about in all the artistic and literary centers in Paris. The French are dumbfounded that in a little provincial city like Milan something could be said that leaves them speechless, they being so accustomed to all the most absurd efforts at originality. . . . Not even I believed that my works would create such an uproar. . . . You know that I have ten and seven of them would likely get ripped apart in an Italian exhibition, but these three 'states of mind' have sufficed to point out a new path.

"It is certain that in all the analytical and accidental explorations by the Impressionists into light, by Cézanne into color, by Matisse and Picasso into form (and after the latter, the Cubists), one senses an absolute need to get out of those and to move on from the constructive elements lighted upon in these recent times to definitive construction!

"This *synthesis*—given the ever more accentuated tendency of the human spirit to render the concrete by means of the abstract —cannot be expressed except by means of *spiritualized objective elements.*

"Such spiritualization will be rendered by pure mathematical values, by pure geometric dimensions. . . .

"What will be the subjects that this *higher objectivity* will have to deal with? If the objects become mathematical *values,* the ambience in which they will exist will be a rhythm specific to the emotion surrounding them.

"The graphic translation of this rhythm will be a *state of form,* a *state of color,* each of which will give back to the viewer the 'state of mind' that produced it.

"While at first sight this seems (according to some) either philosophy or literature or mathematics, according to me it is *pure painting!*"

Boccioni persisted in expounding his theories over and over again, as if consumed by an inner fever that prevented him from thinking of anything else. The direct encounter with Cubism merely reinforced his convictions. He

now laid greater emphasis on the essential difference between the volumetric construction the French practiced and the spiritualized construction of his own works, a point he insisted on in the prefaces to the Paris and London exhibition catalogues. In his own commentary, as rendered into English in the London catalogue, he gave his personal interpretation of what the *States of Mind* signify:

"1. LEAVE-TAKING. In the midst of the confusion of departure, the mingled concrete and abstract sensations are translated into *force-lines* and rhythms in quasi-musical harmony: Mark the undulating lines and the chords made up of the combination of figures and objects. The prominent elements, such as the number of the engine, its profile shown in the upper part of the picture, its wind-cutting fore-part in the centre, symbolical of parting, indicate the features of the scene that remain indelibly impressed upon the mind. 2. THOSE WHO ARE GOING AWAY. Their state of mind is represented by oblique lines on the left. The color indicates the sensation of loneliness, anguish and dazed confusion, which is further illustrated by the faces carried away by the smoke and the violence of speed. One may also distinguish mangled telegraph posts and fragments of the landscape through which the train has passed. 3. THOSE WHO REMAIN BEHIND. The perpendicular lines indicate their depressed condition and their infinite sadness dragging everything down towards the earth. The mathematically spiritualized silhouettes render the distressing melancholy of the soul of those that are left behind."

In Berlin during the European tour an offer was made to buy the trilogy but, as Boccioni wrote to both Russolo and Severini, he refused to let it go.

When Boccioni's book *Pittura, scultura futuriste* came out, the three paintings were harshly criticized by his Futurist comrades themselves and by Carrà in particular who claimed to have been the first to propound the idea that sounds, noises, and odors can be matched with their figurative representation in images. On June 3, 1914, Carrà wrote to Severini: "Boccioni's book . . . is false in its basis and superficial from the pictorial standpoint. That he should believe he can base his Futurist painting on his three little pictures, *States of Mind,* is more than puerile."

Today, however, it is precisely that trio of pictures which is considered the summit of the Futurist aesthetic. Carrieri (1950) stated that "Boccioni goes beyond the Cubist mode of organization when, breaking with every calculation and structural scheme, he puts his curves and spiraling vibrations into action in a dense and varicolored enfolding and intersecting movement. The atmosphere is literally shattered. We are witnessing the first atomic bombardment of Futurist painting. Serpentine curves and fiery disks traverse the narrow spaces swarming with shapes and bodies in the process of dissolving into scales and squalls. Electrical Catherine wheels shoot off from the antennae, and in their swift motions provoke vertical and horizontal fissions. The air is like a plastic incandescent material: The forms and sounds imprint themselves on it. . . ."

Argan (1953) examined the way the symbolic element is translated into specific forms in these pictures. Calvesi (1958) pointed out the "theme of social 'modernism,' of the 'utterly new psychology' of modern life: The tumultuous figuration of a departure becomes the virtual symbol of a new way of life, whipped about and convulsive, set to the extremely rapid rhythm of the new means of transportation. The 'technico-dynamic' theme is even more in evidence here. But the preoccupation that begins to come to the fore in Boccioni, in contrast to the tendencies taking shape in the Futurist movement which favored a mechanical and cinematographic interpretation of dynamism, is one of humanizing and 'dramatizing' the Modernist thesis. Toward that end he decisively set as his aim the representation of the 'state of mind.'"

In the three paintings Calvesi also finds Expressionist elements in both iconography and theme; in particular he cites Edvard Munch in discussing the significance Boccioni gives

to the linear movements as well as the expressive function of his line itself. For Ballo (1964), "the theme of the *Farewells,* of the station, the departure, had become for Boccioni a fundamental motif of modern life experienced as state of mind: The psychological premise is always the emotional charge, the memory of the mother who remains behind, the feelings of sadness and loneliness, while civilization progresses in the tangled swarm of the metropolis."

In 1967 Calvesi examined more deeply the spatial-temporal conception of the *Farewells* and affirmed that there were not various couples embracing but "one and the same couple reproduced at different points in space and time. Boccioni probably intended to flank the actual embrace with the memory of that embrace as it accompanies the course of the train in a simultaneity of succession, unity, perspective, and time." He proposed also a parallelism between the poetic of the states of mind and the philosophy of Henri Bergson: "Bergson himself speaks of 'state of mind,' precisely as the container of 'duration.' And in the quest for a 'synthesis of what one remembers and what one sees'—the words are Boccioni's own—he finds the same optical-mnemonic principle."

Martin (1968) stated that the triptych is a "minor masterpiece" whose three elements should be viewed in a specific sequence: *The Farewells* in the center flanked at the left by *Those Who Go* and at the right by *Those Who Stay.*

In an analysis of the canvases Golding (1972) went back to an idea he had examined in 1959 concerning the introduction of numbers into *The Farewells*: "The stenciled letters, introduced into Cubist painting only a few months earlier, defiantly proclaim the picture's true modernity." His judgment is decidedly positive, though adopting an idea proposed by Martini in 1965 as to what lay behind Boccioni's decision to cast his idea into three separate canvases: "The *States of Mind* are a remarkable achievement, coming as they do from a young man who was digesting five years' worth of revolutionary painting in the course of a few brief weeks. But once again their brilliant modernity is based on a strongly retrogressive support. For their iconography is almost certainly derived from a work that must have seemed, even by Boccioni's still fundamentally provincial standards, somewhat '*passatista.*' In 1898 the Breton painter Charles Cottet had shown at the Venice Biennale a triptych called *Les Pays de la mer* (with, on the right, *Ceux qui restent*, in the center *Les Adieux*, and on the left, *Ceux qui partent*); this had been installed the following year in the Museo Bottancini (now the Museo Civico) in Padua, where Boccioni had spent some of his student years. And whereas the confrontation serves only to accentuate the dynamic intensity of Boccioni's reworking of the same theme, it demonstrates more forcefully than words could ever express the precariousness of the visual basis on which his modern vision of the universe was being built."

The force of these works lies in the absolute difference among the three canvases. In the first, *The Farewells*, a confusion of lines, forms, and objects creates the image that moves forward along with the train winding into space. In *Those Who Go* oblique lines indicate the direction of the movement. In *Those Who Stay* straight lines in vertical succession define the static, even stationary tenor of the representation.

The symbolism Boccioni attributed to the direction or stasis of his lines extended also to the choice of colors: A warm tone—red—prevails in the excitement of the departure and the crowded succession of farewells spoken or gestured; a cold tone—blue—gives the idea of the travelers' movement. As in *The Laugh* (no. 53), one has the impression that he may have superimposed straight-line segments and geometrical impressions over essentially flowing lines, though without in any way suggesting volumes or depth in the image which is simply laid out over the surface with its planes and colors. Even in more abstract representations such as these, Boccioni never dispensed with references to realistic elements



56в



56c

and certainly never limited himself to exploring relationships between lines and colors in accord with a purely formal mode of vision: The object is part of the idea, and it is the pursuit of the idea that guides the artist's efforts without his ever losing sight of the initial stimulus, something real the eye as well as the mind can grasp.

Besides the earlier version in Milan, which is still rooted in an Expressionist approach, there is a trilogy drawn in pencil with an extremely precise and definite technique and which, iconographically, mingles elements from the two series. Another version of the three pictures was executed in woodcut after original pen drawings derived directly from the paintings and made for reproduction in the review *Der Sturm*. A number of oil studies as well as drawings can be presumed to have preceded the series of paintings because realistic elements predominate in them.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 56A—Paris 1912, no. 1, p. 25 (ill.: *Les adieux*); London 1912, no. 1, p. 2 (ill.: *Leave-taking*); Berlin 1912, no. 1, p. 2 (ill.: *Abschied*); Brussels 1912, no. 1, p. 25 (ill.); Rome 1913, no. 2; Rotterdam 1913, no. 2 (Collection F. T. Marinetti); Florence 1913–14, no. 10; Naples 1914, no. 1; Milan 1916–17, no. 64 (ill.); Milan 1924, no. 11; Milan 1933; Rome 1948, no. 20; New York 1961, no. 38, p. 50; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 31; Venice 1986, p. 112

No. 56B—Paris 1912, no. 2 (*Ceux qui vont*); London 1912, no. 2 (*Those Who Are Going Away*); Berlin 1912, no. 2 (*Die Abreisenden*); Brussels 1912, no. 2; Rome 1913, no. 3; Florence 1913–14, no. 9; Milan 1916–17, no. 65 (ill.); Milan 1924, no. 11 (ill.); Rome 1925, no. 8; Milan 1933; Rome 1948, no. 21; New York 1949 (ill. pl. 7); New York 1961, no. 42, p. 51; Paris 1980; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 33; Venice 1986, p. 113

No. 56C—Paris 1912, no. 3 (*Ceux qui restent*); London 1912, no. 3 (*Those Who Remain Behind*); Berlin 1912, no. 4 (*Die Zurückbleibenden*); Brussels 1912, no. 3; Rome 1913, no. 4; Rotterdam 1913, no. 4; Florence 1913–14, no. 11; Naples 1914, no. 3; Milan 1916–17, no. 66 (ill.); Milan 1924, no. 11 (ill.) (*Trittico: Stati d'animo*); Rome 1925, no. 9; Milan 1933; Rome 1948, no. 22 (*Quelli che tornano*); New York 1949 (ill. pl. 6); New York 1961, no. 40, p. 51; Hamburg 1963, no. 24; Paris 1980 ref.2; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 35; Venice 1986, p. 114

No. 56D—New York 1961, no. 36, pp. 35, 143; New York 1973–74, no. 205 (verso); Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 30; New Haven 1983, no. 25, p. 42

No. 56E—New York 1949 (ill. pl. 3); New York 1961, no. 37, p. 49; Paris 1973, no. 17; Milan 1973–74, no. 104; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 32; Venice 1986, p. 111

No. 56G—Rome 1925, no. 16; Milan 1933; Rome 1959, no. 69; Winterthur 1959, no. 11; Paris 1973, no. 15; Milan 1973–74, no. 101; Geneva 1977–78, no. 14; Milan 1982–83, no. 68; Venice 1986, p. 116

No. 56H—New York 1949 (ill. pl. 5); New York 1961, no. 41, p. 49; Paris 1973, no. 18; Milan 1973–74, no. 103; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 34; Venice 1986, p. 111

No. 56I—New York 1961, no. 44, p. 49; New York 1973–74, no. 209; New Haven 1983, no. 26, p. 43

No. 56J—Rome 1959, no. 67; Munich 1959–60, no. 13; Milan 1982–83, no. 70

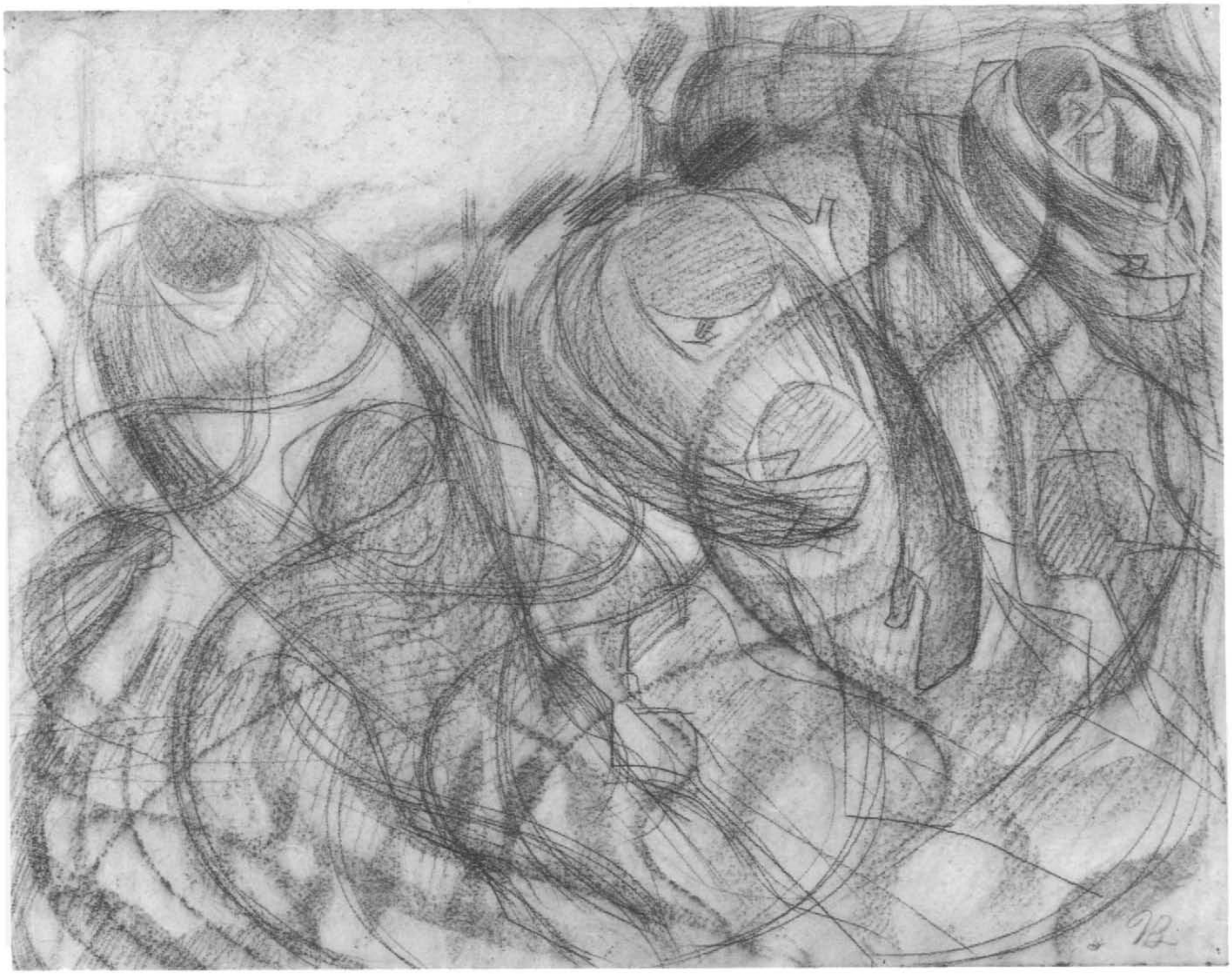
No. 56K—New York 1949 (ill. pl. 4); New York 1961, no. 39, p. 48; Paris 1973, no. 19; Milan 1973–74, no. 102; Venice 1986, p. 111

LITERATURE: No. 56A—Apollinaire 1911; Apollinaire 1912; Rotterdam 1913; Mastrigli 1913 (ill.); Boccioni 1914, no. 1, p. 457 (ill.: *Gli addii: Stati d'animo* [1911]); Sarfatti 1916, p. 13 (ill.) (*Gli addii: Sviluppo della sensibilità futurista*); Walden 1917, p. 33; Sarfatti 1924; Walden 1924, p. 19 (ill.); Marinetti 1927 (ill.); Orazi 1925, p. 810 (ill.); Dinamo Futurista 1933a (ill.); Buzzi 1950, p. 23; Carrieri 1950, pl. 34, p. 34; Valsecchi 1950 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 29, p. 35; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 157–58; Calvesi 1958b, p. 414; Calvesi 1959, p. 32; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 239; Rosenblum 1962, no. 125, p. 181; De Grada 1962, pl. 15; Ballo 1964, no. 448, pp. 248-49; Martini 1965; Jullian 1966, p. 74; Calvesi 1967, pp. 68-70, 72; Martin 1968, no. 81; Taylor 1968, p. 82; Bruno 1969, no. 142a; Kozloff 1973, no. 66; Tisdall and Bozzolla, 1977, no. 35, p. 48; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 723, Lista 1986, p. 17

No. 56B—Boccioni 1914, no. 2, p. 457 (ill.); Art italien moderne 1930, p. 26 (ill.); Buzzi 1950, p. 24; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 32, p. 35; Calvesi 1959, p. 32; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 240; Ballo 1964, no. 450; Jullian 1966, p. 74; Martin 1968, no. 82; Taylor 1968, p. 82; Bruno 1969, no. 143a; Golding 1972, no. 4, p. 13; Kozloff 1973, no. 67; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 31, p. 45; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 724

No. 56C—Boccioni 1914, no. 3, p. 457 (ill.); Orazi 1925, p. 811 (ill.); Art italien moderne 1930, p. 26 (ill.); Buzzi 1950, p. 25; Carrieri 1950, pl. 36, p. 35; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 35, p. 35; Calvesi 1959, p. 32; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 242; Ballo 1964, no. 452; Jullian 1966, p. 74; Martin 1968, no. 83; Taylor 1968, p. 82; Bruno 1969, no. 144a; Kozloff 1973, no. 68; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 32, p. 45; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 725

No. 56D—Calvesi 1958a, no. 60a, pp. 157–58; Taylor 1961b, no. 193 (ill. reversed); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 250; Ballo 1964, no. 433; Bruno 1969, no. 139b; Calvesi 1973, no. 28; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 726



56D



56E



56F



56G

No. 56E—Carrieri 1950, pl. 85, p. 84; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 27, p. 35; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 157–58; Taylor 1961b, no. 194; De Grada 1962, no. 67; Ballo 1964, no. 434; Martin 1968, no. 28; Bruno 1969, no. 139c; Calvesi 1973, no. 29; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 728

No. 56F—Calvesi 1958a, p. 163; Taylor 1961b, no. 195; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 238 (formerly Collection Nell Walden, Berlin); Ballo 1964, no. 447; Bruno 1969, no. 142b; Calvesi and Coen 193, no. 730

No. 56G—Boccioni 1914, p. 467, no. 2 (ill.); Buzzi 1950, p. 21; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 31, p. 30; Castelfranco and Valsecchi 1956, p. 71, pl. 1; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 236; De Grada 1962, pl. 13; Ballo 1964, no. 437; Martin 1968, no. 63; Bruno 1969, no. 140a; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, pl. 24, no. 18; Del Guercio 1980, p. 29; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 731; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 49, ill. 23

No. 56H—Carrieri 1950, pl. 37, p. 35; Valsecchi 1950 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 35; Calvesi 1958a; Taylor 1961b, no. 200; De Grada 1962, no. 69;



56H



56I

Ballo 1964, no. 436; Bruno 1969, no. 140b; Calvesi 1973, no. 35; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 732

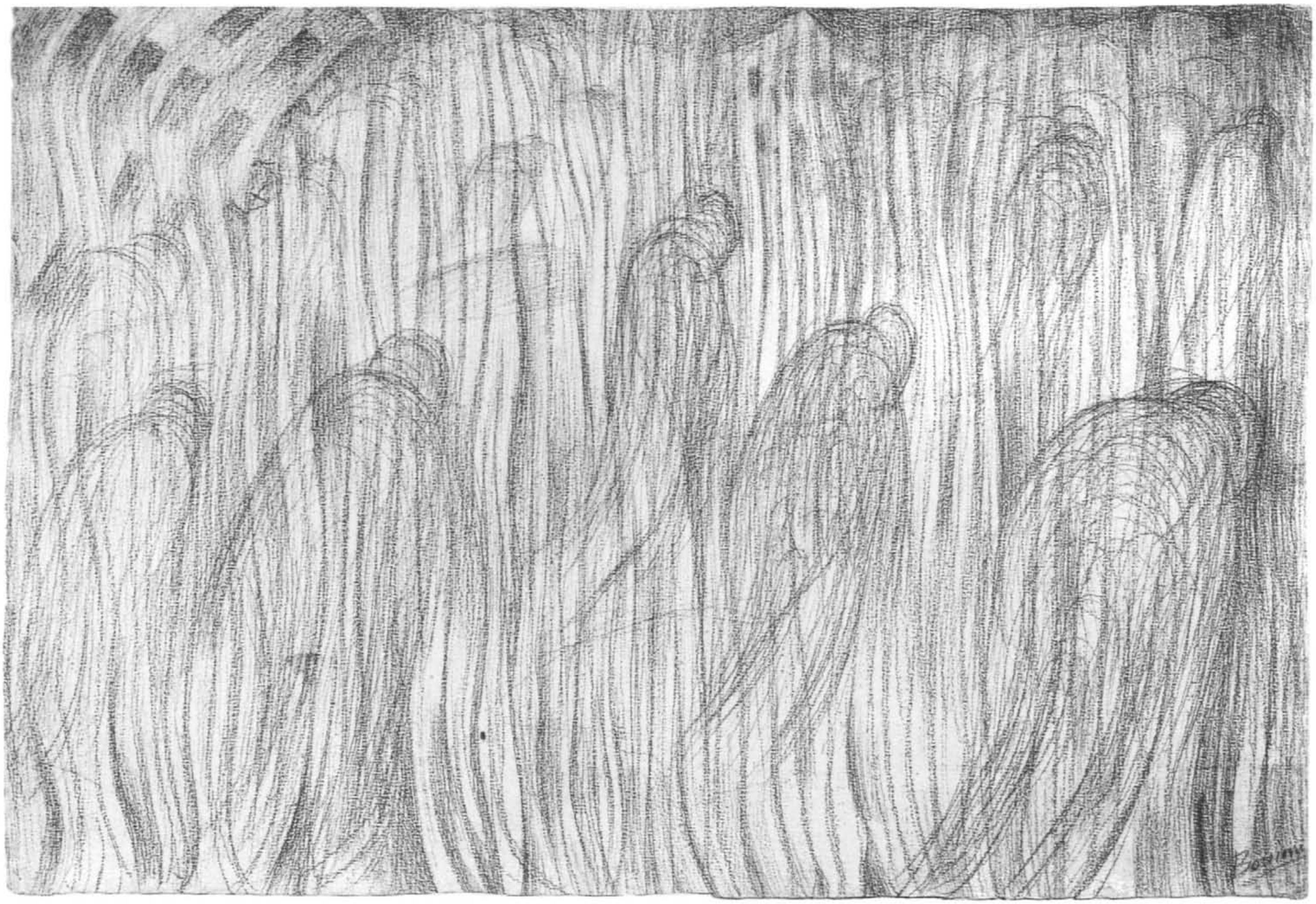
No. 56I—Taylor 1961b, no. 201; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 241 (formerly Collection Nell Walden, Berlin); Ballo 1964, no. 449; Bruno 1969, no. 143b; Calvesi 1973, no. 36; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 736

No. 56J—Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 30, p. 30; Calvesi 1958a, p. 157; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 235; Ballo 1964, no. 440; Bruno 1969, no. 140h; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, no. 19, pl. 25 (acquired 1933 by Amiceto Masoni); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 737

No. 56K—Carrieri 1950, pl. 38, p. 35; Valsecchi 1950 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 33, p. 35; De Grada 1962, no. 68; Ballo 1964, no. 443; Martin 1968, no. 65; Bruno 1969, no. 141d; Birolli 1971, p. 197; Calvesi 1973, no. 34; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 741



56J



56к

57. *Simultaneous Visions*
Visioni simultanee 1911

Oil on canvas
23⅞×23⅞ in. (60.5×60.5 cm.)
Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal

In the chapter on simultaneity in his *Pittura, scultura futuriste* Boccioni attributed great significance to this painting. "The first painting to appear with an affirmation of simultaneity was mine and had the following title: *Simultaneous Visions*. It was exhibited at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris, and in the same exhibition my Futurist painter friends also appeared with similar experiments in simultaneity."

In the catalogue of the Futurist show held in London in March 1912 at the Sackville Gallery he wrote that this canvas was meant to express "the sensation of the inside and the outside, of space and motion, in all directions experienced on approaching a window." This image thus combines two movements—that of the face, which is splintered as it immerses itself in the chaos of the street and that of the whirling synthesis of urban turmoil, swarming with gestures, jolts, and sounds.

The vortex of the modern city is represented by angles that meet, intersect, and pass across each other, by concentric forms that embody a whirling motion, and by the cut planes that indicate a dynamic and rapid passage of time. "Simultaneity is for us lyrical exaltation to the plastic manifestation of a new absolute—speed; of a new and marvelous spectacle—modern life; of a new fever—scientific discovery," wrote Boccioni, declaring his freedom from nineteenth-century sensibility. In *Simultaneous Visions* he expressed the necessity "to Americanize ourselves, to enter into the overwhelming vortex of modernity through its crowds, its automobiles, its telegraphs, its bare lower-class neighborhoods, its sounds, its shrieks, its violence, its cruelties, its cynicism, its implacable careerism—in short to present all the savage antiartistic aspects of our time."

In the present painting and in the similar *The Street Enters the House*, both painted by Boccioni after his trip to Paris in November 1911, one breathes an atmosphere different from that of the *States of Mind* (no. 56). Here the brushwork has become more raw and harsher; the tones are more violent, almost unpleasant. The clash of colors represents that emotion produced by the mass of visual and auditory stimuli generated by a modern city. These works were influenced by Cubist models, although a hatching technique recalls the artist's experiments with Divisionism.

According to Calvesi (1976), *Simultaneous Visions* has its roots in Delaunay's depictions of the Eiffel Tower, both in the representation of houses collapsing and converging at the center of the picture and in the placement of the woman at the window. Boccioni interprets with dramatic emphasis the flow of forces and dynamic relations between objects, underscoring the innumerable tensions with penetrating and cutting shapes. Only in the works of 1913 will the concept of simultaneity be resolved in a more synthetic and less fragmented manner.

This was one of the some twenty paintings that Wolfgang Borchardt bought from the 1912 Futurist show at Gallery Der Sturm in Berlin.

EXHIBITIONS: Paris 1912, no. 7 (*Visions simultanées*); London 1912, no. 7 (*Simultaneous visions*); Berlin 1912, no. 7 (*Scheinvision*); Brussels 1912, no. 7; Milan 1982–83, no. 65 and cover; Venice 1986, p. 122

LITERATURE: Walden 1912, no. 3; Rotterdam 1913 (listed as one of the works sold from the Berlin 1912 exhibition to Wolfgang Borchardt); Boccioni 1914, p. 458, no. 7; Carrieri 1950, pl. 50, p. 12 (*Visione simultanea della finestra*); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 24, p. 36 (*La strada entra nella casa*); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 278; Ballo 1964, no. 425 (*La strada entra nella casa*); Calvesi 1967, p. 13, pp. 268–69; Bruno 1969, no. 137 (*La strada entra nella casa*); Calvesi 1976; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 744



57

58A. *The Strengths of a Street*
Le forze di una strada 1911

Oil on canvas
39⅜ × 31½ in. (100 × 80 cm.)
Hänggi Collection, on loan to Kunstmuseum Basel

B. *Study for "The Strengths of a Street"*
Studio per Le forze di una strada 1911

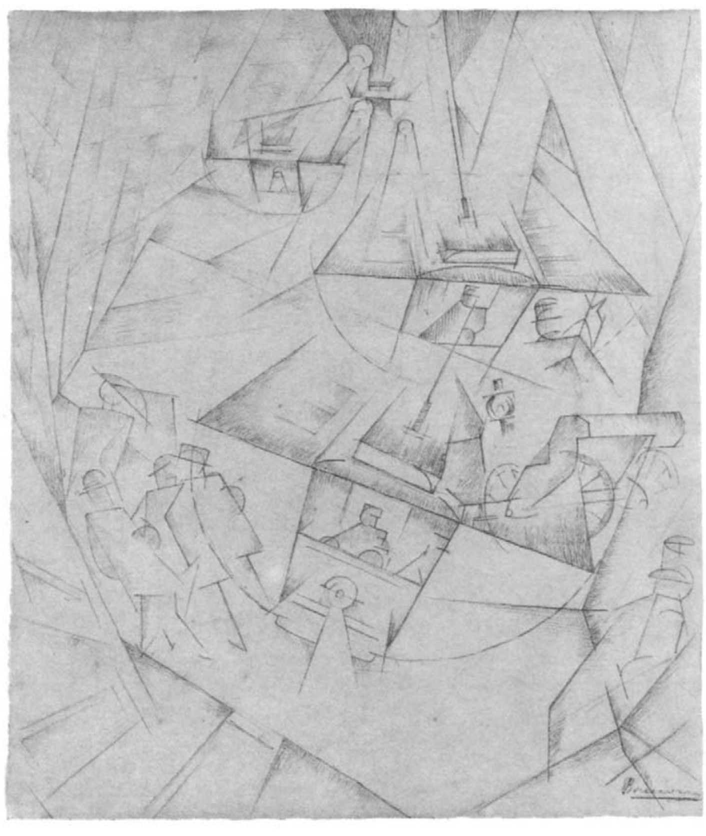
Pencil on paper
17¼ × 14⅝ in. (43.8 × 37.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

Painted after Boccioni's trip to Paris in November 1911, *The Strengths of a Street* shows signs of his encounter with Cubism. It was first exhibited in Paris in February 1912 and was included in the Futurist shows that traveled from the French capital to major European cities. In a 1912 photograph *The Strengths of a Street* appears in the window of the Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin, on the occasion of the exhibition of Futurist painting held there in April and May of that year. The work was in the collection of Herwarth Walden, director of Der Sturm and then of his wife Nell until 1954, when it and other paintings in her possession were sold at auction in Stuttgart.

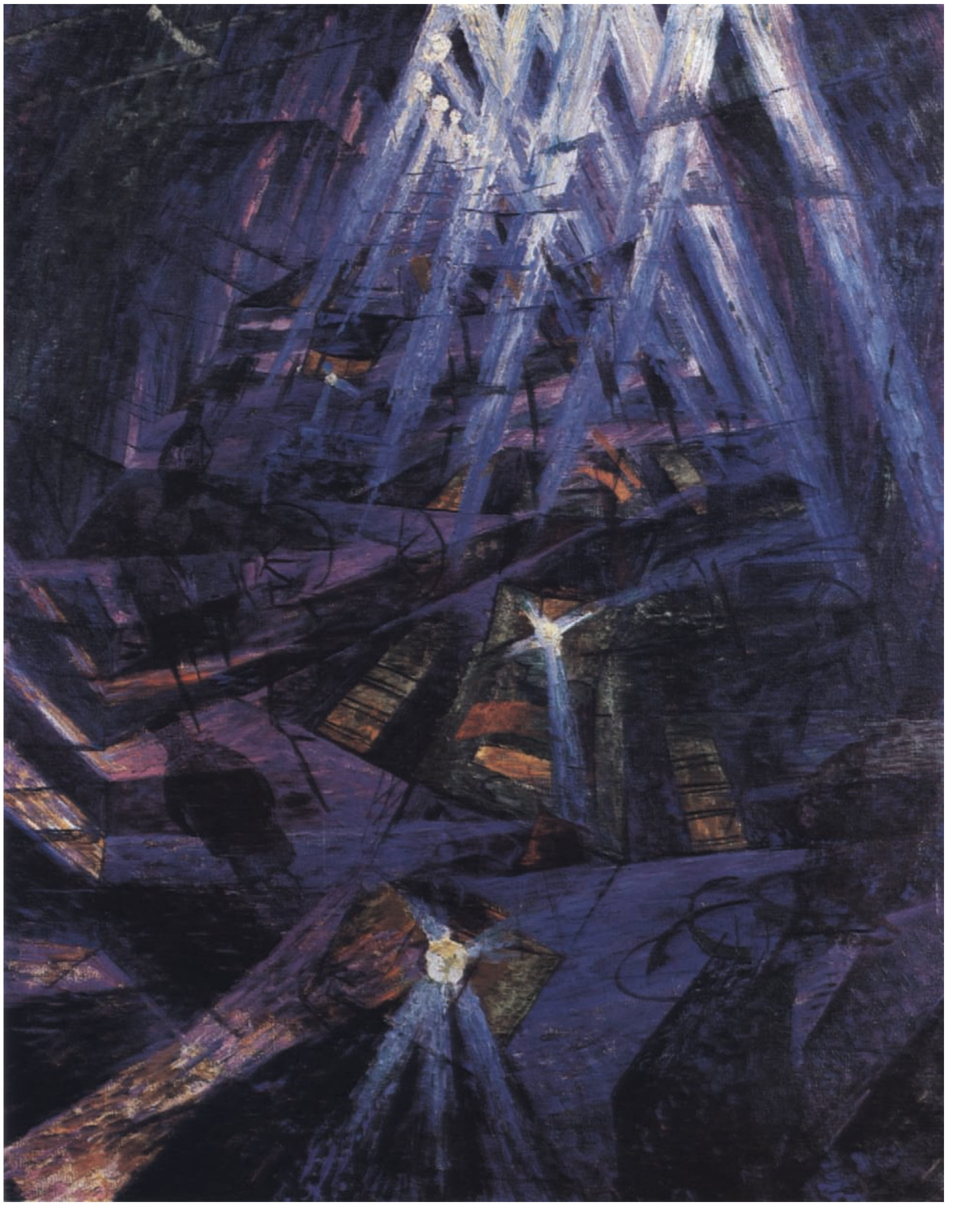
The painting is one of the most abstract in Boccioni's oeuvre; it makes no descriptive concessions, and the representation is reduced to a few essential hints. *The Strengths of a Street* belongs to the same period as the triptych *States of Mind* (no. 56); in it, however, Boccioni achieved a greater structural simplification, eliminating curved forms in order to express the sense of movement synthetically. "One can also see in our paintings," he wrote in the catalogue for the Paris show, "spots, lines, and areas of color that do not correspond to any reality, but, according to a law of our inner mathematics, musically prepare and increase the emotion of the spectator.

"We thus create in some way an emotional setting, seeking by intuitive strokes the sympathies and attachments that exist between the outer (concrete) scene and the inner (abstract) emotion. Those seemingly illogical and inexplicable lines, spots, and areas of color are actually the mysterious keys to our paintings. . . . We are destroying everyday, in ourselves and in our paintings, the realistic forms and obvious details that still serve to establish a bridge of intelligence between ourselves and the public."

In the only known drawing related to the painting, Boccioni accentuated the squared lines by creating angles of intersection that become obvious through color. While in the painting these extensions of luminous and dynamic rhythms stand out above all, in the drawing the scene appears more clearly defined.



58B



58A

EXHIBITIONS: No. 58A—Paris 1912, no. 9 (*Les forces d'une rue*); London 1912, no. 9 (*The Forces of a Street*); Berlin 1912, no. 9 (*Die Macht der Strasse*); Brussels 1912, no. 9; Milan 1924 (illustrated but not included in list of works exhibited)

No 58B—Winterthur 1959, no. 42; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 32; Paris 1973, no. 21; Milan 1973–74, no. 113; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 48; Milan 1982–83, no. 75

LITERATURE: No. 58A—Walden 1912, ref; Rotterdam 1913; Boccioni 1914, no. 9, p. 458; Sarfatti 1916, p. 13 (ill.: *Le forze di una strada* [*Attuazione delle teoriche futuriste*]); Walden 1918, p. 44 (ill.; Collection Walden, Berlin); Walden 1924, p. 17 (ill.); Buzzi 1950, p. 29; Carrieri 1950, pl. 20, p. 21; Giani 1950 (ill.: *Linee forza di una strada*); Valsecchi 1950; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 36, p. 34 (Kunstmuseum Basel, Collection N. Urech Walden); Calvesi 1958a, p. 162; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 281; De Grada 1962, no. 72; Ballo 1964, no. 455, p. 298; Calvesi 1967, pp. 72, 295–96; Martin 1968, no. 78; Bruno 1969, no. 145a; Gerhardus 1977, no. 51; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 28, pp. 42-43; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 747; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 56, ill. 25

No. 58B—Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 31; Taylor 1961, no. 217 (1912); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 289; Ballo 1964, no. 454; Martin 1968, no. 79; Bruno 1969, no. 145b; Birolli 1971, p. 16; Kozloff 1973, no. 63; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 748; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 56, ill. 26

59. *Horizontal Volumes*
Costruzione orizzontale 1912

Oil on canvas
37⅜ × 37⅝ in. (95 × 95.5 cm.)
Signed on back: U. Boccioni
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen München
—Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst, Munich

This painting was first exhibited in February 1913 in the foyer of the Teatro Costanzi in Rome. At that time the writer Emilio Cecchi pointed out Boccioni's success in achieving "a solid connection of luminous planes, force-lines, and volumes." During this period Boccioni's investigation of pictorial plasticity was paralleled by a study of compenetration in sculpture; this double interest is evident when the present painting is compared with *Antigraceful* (no. 86), a plaster model later cast in bronze. As Boccioni remarked: "My talent has begun to develop, and I propose to realize, by means of its diligent and enthusiastic experiments, the concept of fusing the object and its surroundings, with a consequent *compenetration of planes.* I propose, in short, to bring the figure to life in its surroundings without making it the slave of artificial or fixed lights, or of a supporting plane."

In *Pittura, scultura futuriste* Boccioni wrote: "The planes and volumes of an object and its setting are no longer isolated and absolute, inscribed in so many spaces regulated by a perspective sequence, but compenetrate each other insofar as they are necessary to the formation of a new individuality, to the construction of the autonomous organism (painting), which the artist must create."

This concept of the simultaneity of vision —the eye perceiving at the same time the object and the setting that grasps and absorbs it, thus forming a unity based on the reciprocal exchange of forces—absorbed Boccioni especially around 1912, although signs of this development are evident in previous works.

Boccioni pointed out that "the concept of a closed, finite, and measurable object is the fruit of the traditional objective and photographic concern to redo the object and of the concern to *place oneself in front* of the object, to stare at it, and thus to detach it from life in order to transport it into art. . . . These procedures result in analytical enumeration, impassive and powerless to create drama. We, on the other hand, want to produce the plastic result of object + setting, arresting the construction of the object precisely at the point where poetic intuition suggests the complementary help of the setting. It is in this instant that the element of the setting enters into the element of the object and forms a simultaneous compenetration of planes."

Golding (1972) stressed that the dynamic dissolution of space is achieved in a more effective and convincing fashion in Boccioni's paintings than in his simultaneous experiments in sculpture. "This is partly due," Golding noted, "to the effects of transparency which obviously at this moment in time came more easily to painting than to sculpture, and also to the use of color, which in the spiralling rhythms which echo each other like ripples in a well also give the painting a life and vibrancy which one feels the sculpture must have lacked. Boccioni was clearly aware of the problems posed by the confrontation between the two mediums, and two slightly later works show him coming to grips with them, with his now familiar approach which involved a blending in equal degrees of daring and compromise."

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1913, no. 7 (*Costruzione orizzontale*); Rotterdam 1913, no. 7; Florence 1913–14, no. 3 (*Dimensioni orizzontali*); Rome 1914, no. 12 (*Costruzione dinamica orizzontale*); Milan 1916–17, no. 32 (*Volumi orizzontali*); Rome 1925, no. 13 (*Volumi orizzontali*); Milan 1927 (*Volumi orizzontali*); Paris 1973, no. 22; Milan 1973–74, no. 161 (*Volumi orizzontali*); Düsseldorf 1974, no. 58; Venice 1986, p. 128

LITERATURE: Cecchi 1912; Sarfatti 1916, p. 15 (*Costruzioni orizzontali* [Primi studi futuristi]); Calvesi 1958a, no. 60b, p. 164; Archivi del futurismo 1962, no. 271; De Grada 1962, pl. 18 (*Volumi orizzontali*); Ballo 1964, no. 460, p. 322; Martin 1968, no. 114; Bruno 1969, no. 147a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 751; Crispolti 1986, pl. 8



59

60. *Matter*
Materia 1912

Oil on canvas
88⅝ × 59 in. (225 × 150 cm.)
Private collection
(THIS PAINTING IS NOT IN THE EXHIBITION.)

Matter is the work in which the artist succeeded most fully in realizing his theories about compenetration of planes and in expressing a relationship between figure and surroundings that is not too deeply indebted to Cubism. The result is a vibrant and transparent painting whose shapes are molded by color and light rather than by their own volumes.

When the painting was exhibited in the foyer of the Teatro Costanzi in Rome in 1913, Roberto Longhi, then a young critic and one of the first to take the Futurists seriously, was quick to sense the value of Boccioni's experimental efforts: "His essential, genuinely artistic talent is that of being able to elevate to a lyrical plane, by the force of his utterly warm and ardent painting, what with others remains no more than flat statement. Thus the compenetration of planes, which in Cubism is often only an arbitrary prolongation of lines, with him is a true and proper compenetration, with genuine material substance, of planes that are colorful, vibrant, efflorescent, atomic. Consider in *Matter* the magical effects of the radially conceived composition."

The Symbolist effects, the colors chosen as complementaries, the dynamism of intercrossing planes—all combine here to create a spatial complexity that is not solely based on the structural organization of the image. The composition's fulcrum is the clasped hands which, together with the head, are the only naturalistic elements and are deliberately rendered grotesque. In other works, especially in those immediately preceding *Matter*, Boccioni had intensified coloristic feeling by using beams of light shooting down from above and carrying not only their own luminosity but also lines taken from the landscape or cityscape. Here the fusion between interior and exterior, indoors and outdoors, attains a consummate synthesis and a unity in which the two categories can scarcely be recognized, much less separated. The woman (Boccioni's mother) —at once symbolic and terribly real—is cut through and across by the iron grille of a balcony, whose ornamental motifs invade, penetrate, and embed themselves in her, and by a swiftly prancing horse, which is counterpoised by a man in motion at the opposite side of the picture. The horse's gait is repeated in *Elasticity* (no. 69), a painting of the same time, and the position of the male figure at the right anticipates the falcade (to use an appropriately equestrian term) of the sculptures *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (no. 88) and *Muscles in Velocity* (no. 72E) of a slightly later date.

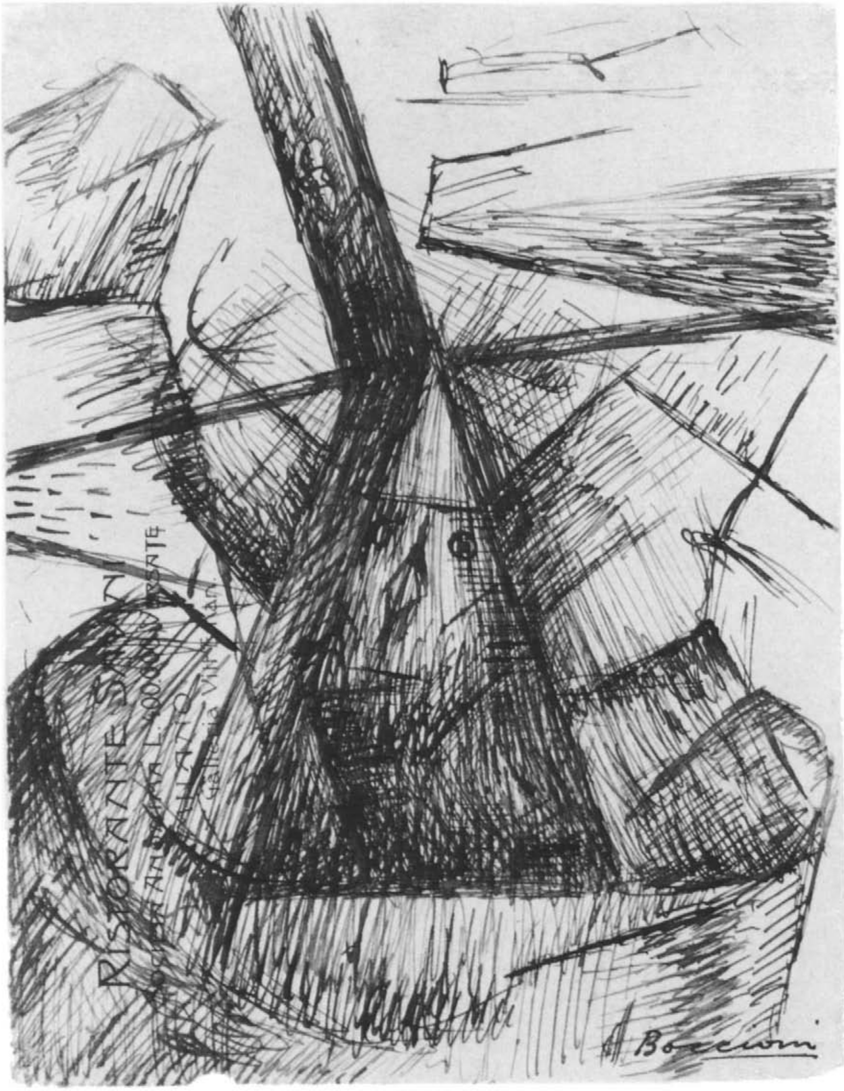
The pictorial technique is extraordinarily complex: Here Boccioni succeeded in fusing markedly heterogeneous methods and styles in a single image. The continuous and extremely rapid vibration of his brushwork gives shape, in a space interlaced with myriad lines, to the majestic figure of the artist's mother which is glimpsed and then engulfed by manifestations of light and movement.

Taylor (1961) remarked that although Boccioni's language had now arrived at a greater abstraction, "it would no longer be a geometrical language since that had failed to penetrate to the internal vitality he wished to express."

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1913, no. 1; Rotterdam 1913, no. 1; London 1914, no. 4; San Francisco 1915, no. 1142; Milan 1916–17, no. 49; Geneva 1920–21, no. 26; Milan 1924, no. 24 (ill.); Rome 1925, no. 1 (reproduced upside down); Milan 1933; Rome 1959, no. 77; Winterthur 1959, no. 18; New York 1961, no. 45; Hamburg 1963, no. 26; Paris 1973, no. 25; Milan 1973–74, no. 162; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 55; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 23; Venice 1986, p. 128

LITERATURE: Cecchi 1913; Longhi 1913; Boccioni 1914, p. 463, no. 1 (ill.: *Materia* [*Sviluppo della sensibilità futurista*]); Severini 1933, p. 359; Benet 1949, no. 52; Carrieri 1950, pl. 55, p. 49; Pastonchi 1950, p. 35; Sironi and Zervos 1950, p. 13; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 44, p. 34; Calvesi 1958a, p. 164; De Micheli 1959, pl. 11; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 275; De Grada 1962, no. 73; Ballo 1964, no. 463, pp. 321–22; Calvesi 1967, p. 175; Martin 1968, no. 113; Bruno 1969, no. 148a (1911–12 [?]); Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 71; Del Guercio 1980, p. 30; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 752; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 70, ill. 34





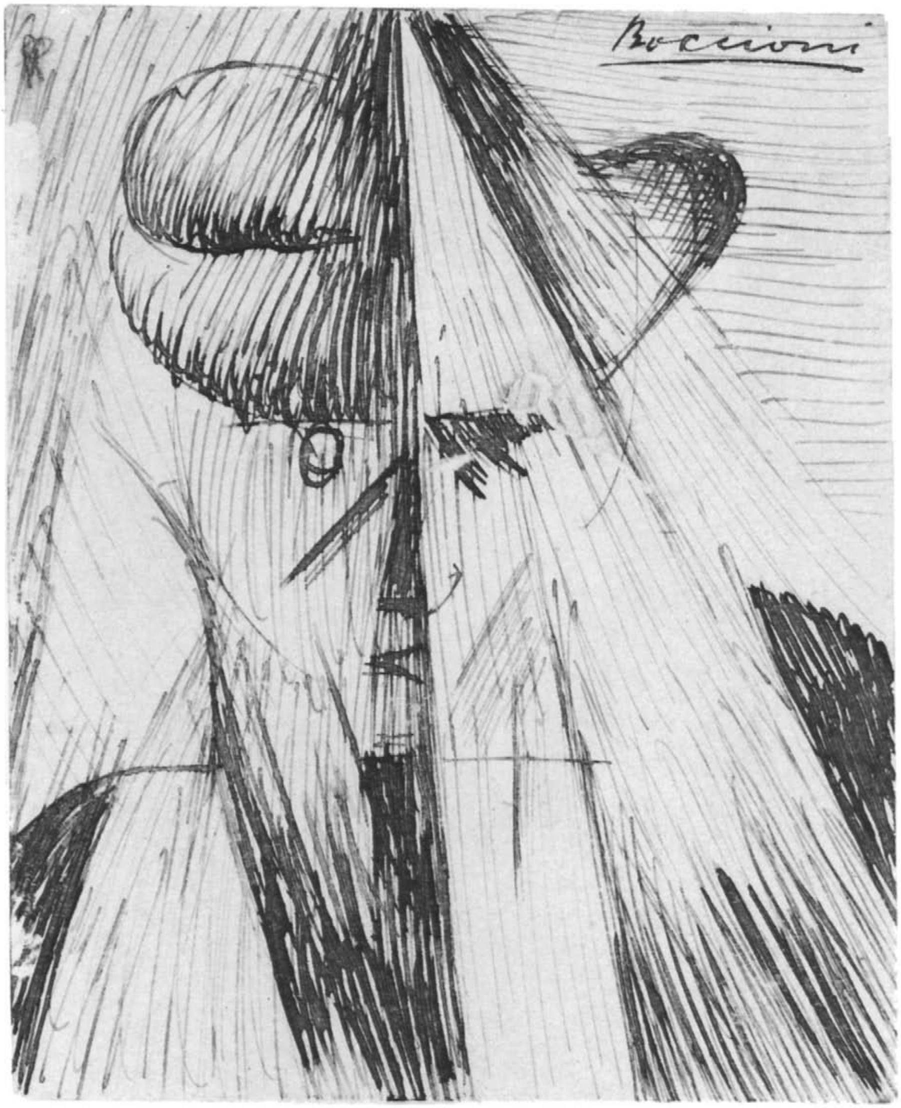
61A

61A. *Study for "Head + Light + Window"*
Studio 1912

Ink on paper
12$\frac{1}{8}$ × 8$\frac{1}{4}$ in. (30.8 × 21 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

B. *Head Against the Light (The Artist's Sister)*
Studio per Testa + luce 1912

Ink on paper
4$\frac{3}{4}$ × 4 in. (12.1 × 10.2 cm.)
Signed top right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York



61B

These two studies are connected with the sculpture *Head + Light + Window,* generally dated to 1911 on the authority of the artist himself in his *Pittura, scultura futuriste.* Although the sculpture was lost around 1917, photographs and some written evidence testify to the importance of Boccioni's new experiments in three dimensions. The sculpture was composed of a variety of materials. Marinetti's manifesto on Tactilism of January 11, 1921, states that it was realized "with materials of absolutely contrary nature in weight and tactile value: iron, porcelain, and a woman's hair." Represented was a woman's head with horsehair tresses and a glass eye. A scrap of canvas with pieces of glass rested on the head; rays of light extended from the head and struck a house sitting on the woman's shoulder. The face was constructed frontally, but to judge from the photographs, the profile emerging from a beam of light could be intuited.

The date of the sculpture seems open to question. In 1911 Boccioni was thoroughly taken up with working out his theories on states of mind and was not yet acquainted with Cubist decomposition, so it is unlikely that he had come to grips with the problems of working in three dimensions. He may have

claimed an earlier date for this sculpture in order to make it appear that he had anticipated the Cubists' three-dimensional constructions and the aggregations of heterogeneous materials Picasso began to turn out in 1912.

The idea of a pyramidal visualization of light concentrated into a beam or bundle of rays and circumscribed in a triangular form is found in one of the drawings in which Boccioni attempted to render the sensation of different materials by linework that is heavier or lighter according to the transparency or opacity of the substance involved. If the connection with the now-destroyed sculpture were not so obvious, it would be difficult to make out the lineaments of a face behind the dense interweaving in this drawing, doubtless the most abstract but at the same time most successful study in a series that preceded the realization of the sculpture. The other sketch seen here is more realistic and lacks the constructive force of the more pertinent study.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 61A—Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 43
No. 61B—Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 42

LITERATURE: No. 61A—Taylor 1961b, no. 224 (1912); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 319; Ballo 1964, no. 473 (*Studio per Fusione di una testa e di una finestra*, 1912); Bruno 1969, no. 150d; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 766
No. 61B—Taylor 1961b, no. 222 (1912); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 316; Ballo 1964, no. 470 (1912); Martin 1968, no. 143; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 772

62. *Study for the Sculpture "Empty and Full Abstracts of a Head"* *Studio per Vuoti e pieni astratti di una testa* 1912

Gouache on paper
22¼ × 17⅝ in. (56.5 × 44.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

Like nos. 61A and 61B, this work is connected with Boccioni's investigations into plastic forms. It seems to be a preparatory study for the sculpture *Empty and Full Abstracts of a Head*, a work destroyed immediately after the artist's death and known only from a few photographs. It is certain that the sculpture was more traditional than the *Head + Light + Window*, not least because it was done in a single material, plaster. Furthermore it was not essentially three-dimensional; the head looks less like a portrait in the round than like a relief with high prominences and very deep hollows. The face was markedly deformed by force-lines cutting across the features and forming intense concavities.

In summarizing his ideas, Boccioni wrote in *Pittura, scultura futuriste:* "If we lock up the object in a more or less decisive and complete outline, we perpetrate an arbitrary act in that we detach a part from the indissoluble whole. We fall into the old pre-Impressionist pre-Rembrandt concern with appearance; we lose ourselves in a primordial infantile vision of reality which was taken as truth in other times, by primitive and simple minds, and was appropriate to conceptions of life based on fixed, static subdivisions between animate and inanimate, between object and ambience, and, in art, between *solemn* (human drama) and *not solemn* (drama of things). Now, if we wish to escape from the old artistic concept and create



62

new aspects of reality, if we wish to destroy the episode and create the object as experienced in its own forces and not broken down into the parts composing it—an analysis almost always deleterious—we will see that lines, forms, and colors rendered as forces are the only dynamic expression possible. With the determination of these forces, the object is interpreted in its characteristic potentiality, stripped of all sentimental value, fully alive in its dynamism."

In the present work Boccioni studied the relationship between the face and what is outside it by prolonging the lines that break up the features, thereby producing rigid angles. The planes, cut through by light, become impacted into the face itself but in a very different manner than in Cubist sculpture—here there is a different type of equilibrium, one that is not static but dynamic. The energy of the lines originating in the face extends well beyond the head itself and penetrates into and involves the surrounding space in a manner totally unlike the Cubists' constructional and analytic approach.

LITERATURE: Ballo 1964, no. 478; Bruno 1969, no. 152c; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 777

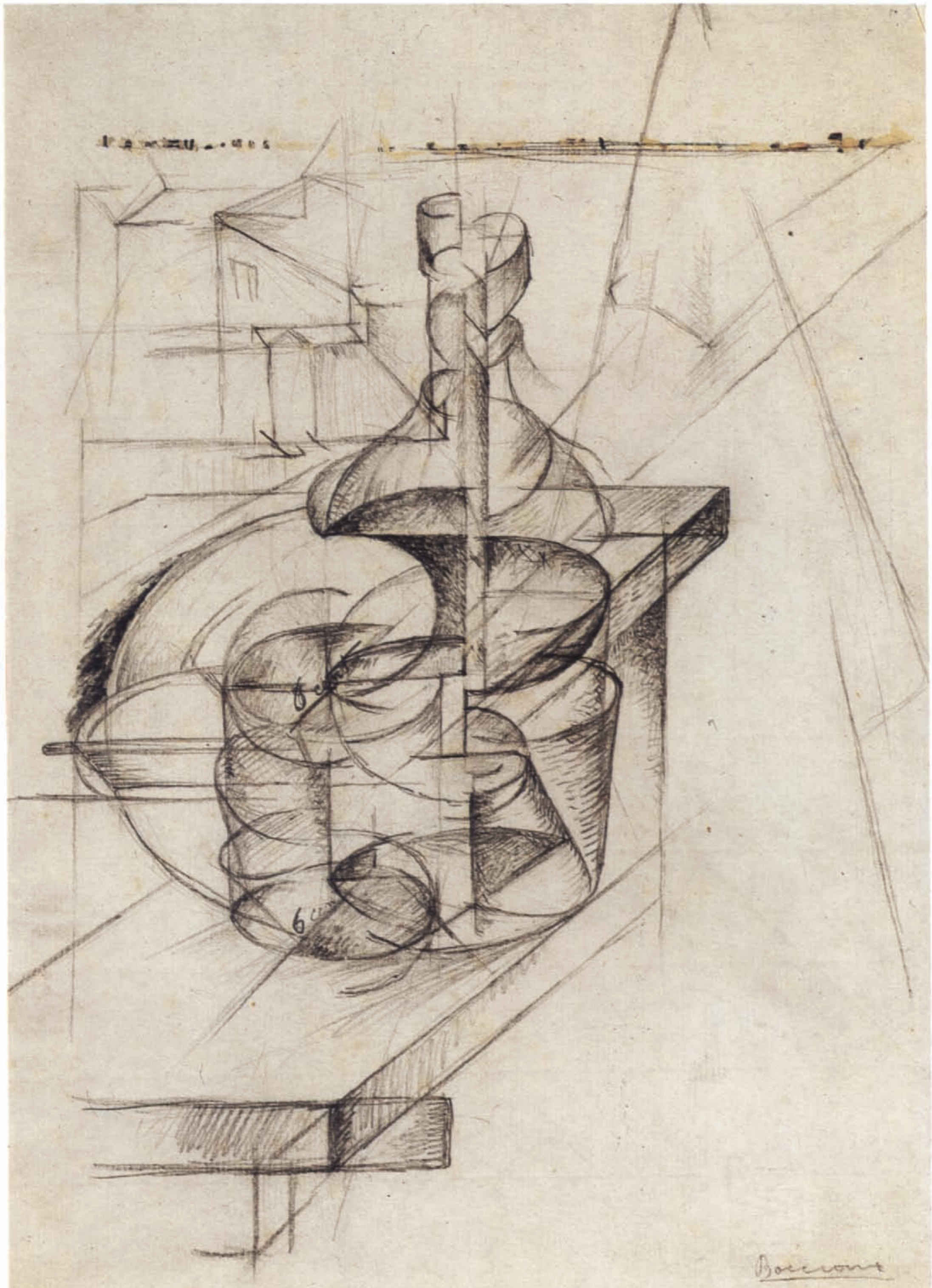
63. *Table + Bottle + House*
Tavola + bottiglia + caseggiato 1912

Pencil on paper
13⅛ × 9⅜ in. (33.4 × 23.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

Taylor's proposal (1961b) that this drawing is closely connected with the sculpture *Development of a Bottle in Space* (no. 87) was seconded by Martin (1968), Bruno (1969), and Golding (1972). The last compared its rendering of volumes with Cubist studies: "[This] sketch, which combines complexity and lucidity in equal degrees, may once again owe something to Juan Gris, the most expository of the great Cubists. Boccioni's drawing illustrates yet another phrase of the sculpture manifesto which suggests a sound basis for a new, more open treatment of sculptural form. 'We have to start from the central nucleus of the object that we want to create,' Boccioni had declared, 'in order to discover the new laws that link it . . . invisibly but mathematically to the APPARENT PLASTIC INFINITE and the INTERNAL PLASTIC INFINITE.' "

By exploiting linear curves, Boccioni created a unified whole made up of bottle, glass, and plate. The plane on which these objects rest breaks off abruptly and extends wedgelike into their interiors. The houses in the background appear to be distributed on a plane that does not intersect with the rest of the image.

As Taylor suggested, a number of ele-



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ments relate the present drawing to the three-dimensional *Development of a Bottle in Space*: the feeling of rotation, which is accentuated by the ascending curvilinear movement, and the supporting base, which participates in the dynamism of the object but remains detached from the energetic pulse. Calvesi (1973), however, considers that this drawing is unrelated to the sculpture and suggests that it may be a study for another work, probably a painting, that was never realized.

EXHIBITIONS: New York 1949 (ill. pl. 11); Munich 1959–60, no. 12; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 36; Paris 1973, no. 28; Milan 1973–74, no. 202; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 62; Milan 1982–83, no. 83; Venice 1986, p. 127

LITERATURE: Carrieri 1950, pl. 41, p. 40; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 56; Calvesi 1958a, p. 165; Mazzariol 1959, p. 17; Taylor 1961a, p. 86 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 219; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 321; Ballo 1964, no. 483; Bruno 1969, no. 154b; Golding 1972, p. 20; Calvesi 1973, no. 43; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 783

64. *Figure*
Figura 1912

Watercolor and tempera on paper
22⅛ × 15¼ in. (56.3 × 38.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

This watercolor, along with the painting *Antigraceful* (no. 66), is Boccioni's closest approach to Cubist figuration and, in particular, to the phase of Picasso's work that culminated in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. When he was in Paris in late 1911, Boccioni saw works by Picasso in Kahnweiler's gallery, and he appears to have taken great interest in Picasso's African-influenced figures. The masklike face in the present painting is strikingly like the figure at the right in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

Here Boccioni carries the simplification of the pictorial form to the point of grotesque accentuation of the facial features. While he developed his image through a pictorial approach emphasized by a refined color sense, Picasso translated his treatment into something more plastic, more sculptural, with an acute and penetrating delineation of planes.

In both iconography and form the present work also has much in common with Picasso's painting *Friendship* (Hermitage, Leningrad). Both paintings are distinguished by a hard, almost harsh treatment, but whereas Picasso molds the contours to bring out the plastic character, Boccioni injects so much impetus into his force-lines that their propulsion bursts the limits of the form itself.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1973–74, no. 168; Milan 1982–83, no. 95

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 31; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 286; Ballo 1964, no. 507; Bruno 1969, no. 159; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 784



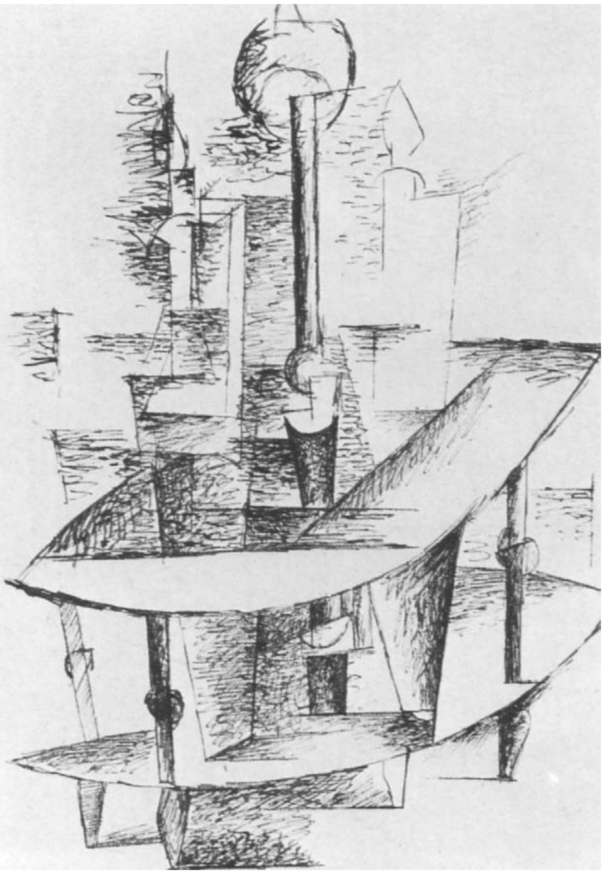
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65. *Still Life: Glass and Siphon*
Natura morta con sifone per seltz 1912

Collage, gouache, and ink on paper
12¼×8⅜ in. (31.1×21.3 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Yale University Art Gallery (Gift of Collection Société Anonyme), New Haven

This appears to be Boccioni's first work on paper incorporating external elements as collage: a scrap of newspaper and a piece cut from a Futurist handbill.

The effect of decomposition evident in this mixed-medium work was adopted by Boccioni in 1912, reflecting his new interest in volumetric aspects. For stylistic reasons the drawing can be assigned to that year, though without absolute certainty. Since the Cubists' first works using collage date to the second half of 1912, it is difficult to determine who first used the new technique. It is certainly possible that Picasso and Braque on the one hand and Boccioni on the other hit on the same aesthetic solution simultaneously, though with profoundly different motivations. Boccioni's orientation was dynamic, aiming to fuse object and ambience in a single image by means of the compenetration of elements; the Cubists, however, used their bits and pieces of newsprint chiefly as a way of countering the photographic illusionism of the object depicted and of emphasizing the formal and structural autonomy of the picture itself.



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life: Cruet Set*, 1912. Ink on paper, 12⅜×9⅝ in. (31.4×24.4 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 318; New Haven 1983, no. 20, pl. 4

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 270 (1914); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 326; Ballo 1964, no. 485; Bruno 1969, no. 155; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 785



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66. *Antigraceful*
Antigrazioso 1912

Oil on canvas
31½ × 31½ in. (80 × 80 cm.)
Private collection

In "Fondamento plastico della pittura e scultura futuriste," a chapter in his *Pittura, scultura futuriste* (1913), Boccioni wrote: "Gauguin's voyage to Tahiti, and the appearance of Central African idols and fetishes in the ateliers of our friends in Montmartre and Montparnasse, are events of historical destiny in European sensibility, like the invasion of a barbaric race into the organism of a decadent people! We Italians have need of the barbaric in order to renew ourselves, we Italians more than any other people, since our past is the greatest in the world and thus all the more dangerous to our life! Our race has always held sway and has always renewed itself by barbaric contacts. We must smash, demolish, and destroy our traditional harmony, which makes us fall into a *gracefulness* created by timid and sentimental cubs. We disown the past because we want to forget, and in art to forget means to be renewed." This passage clearly explains Boccioni's interest in the formal motifs of distant and primitive civilizations, which were already being used by the Cubists. "Painting and sculpture in primitive epochs," wrote Boccioni, "are directed toward *influencing* and *suggesting*, and they use any means to do so, without the remotest hint of the stupid *artistic exercise* that is always outside reality. In those happy periods the word *art* is unknown, as is the concept of the artistic and the artificial subdivisions of painting, sculpture, music, literature, poetry, philosophy. . . . Instead everything is architecture because everything in art must be the creation of autonomous organisms constructed with abstract plastic values, i.e., with the equivalents of reality. This is why we are resolutely and violently antiartistic, antipictorial, antisculptural, antipoetic, antimusical. The works of art of savages, so fatefully entering into the process of modern renewal, prove the truth of what I say."

Relying on Cubist figuration, Boccioni tried to destroy the concepts of proportion, harmony, and beautiful form that are characteristic of the tradition of Italian painting. "What we want to proclaim and impose on Italy," wrote Boccioni, "is the new sensibility that gives to painting, sculpture, and all the arts a new material to create new relations of form and color."

In the present painting Boccioni created an image of extraordinary strength. The colors, playing on two orders of tonality, which range from browns to grays and metallic blues, are applied with a thick and loaded brush. The solidity is reinforced by the balanced constructive layout enclosed within the space of a room. In comparing it with previous works, the viewer sees a renewed interest in composition and a more plastic, less dynamic approach to the figure.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1913, no. 8; Rotterdam 1913, no. 8; Milan 1916–17, no. 60; Milan 1924, no. 9; Rome 1925, no. 11 (*Studio della madre [Antigrazioso]*); Milan 1933; Rome 1948, no. 23; Venice 1950, p. 58, no. 11; Rome 1959, no. 86; Venice 1966, p. 12, no. 73; Tokyo 1982, no. 30; Verona 1985–86, no. 76; Venice 1986, p. 131

LITERATURE: Boccioni 1914, pp. 463, 468 (ill.); Soffici 1914, n.p.; Sarfatti 1916, no. 39; Buzzi 1950, p. 32; Carrieri 1950, p. 47 (*Compenetrazione di figura ambiente*); Giani 1950 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 41; Carrieri 1961, pl. 12; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, nos. 348, 387; De Grada 1962, no. 87; Ballo 1964, no. 502; Martin 1968, no. 123 (1912–13); Bruno 1969, no. 160a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 787



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67. *Abstract Dimensions*
Dimensioni astratte 1912

Oil and tempera on canvas
23⅜ × 23⅝ in. (59.5 × 60 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

Boccioni thought *Abstract Dimensions* important enough to show in the 1913 exhibition in the foyer of the Teatro Costanzi in Rome. Here he rethinks the volumes and linear tensions of the subject, doubtless as a consequence of his increasing interest in sculpture. There is a return to Divisionist techniques, but with broader and heavier brushstrokes that create large wedges of color which fit together in a mosaic-like fashion.

Of his relationship to the Impressionists, Boccioni wrote: "My works, which some people (a little myopic or obsessed by recent Cubist notions) have sometimes accused of classical naturalism, have always shown my concern with carrying Impressionism forward and with benefiting from all the naturalistic discoveries in color and form we owe to it. Through those means Futurist painting has managed to convey the solidity of bodies, without at the same time losing dynamism as the Cubists are doing, because Futurism transforms the disaggregating vibration of Impressionism into a solidification or centrifugal construction coupled with a centripetal construction which renders the object's weight and volume."

In this transitional work, color plays a large part in emphasizing volumes and is itself a plastic element. Here Boccioni is not concerned with the compenetration of planes nor does he try to make the figure an integral part of the ambience in which it is immersed. His interest lies instead in the plastic construction of the face and bust, so that what can be considered background is left to emerge from the neutral white of the prepared canvas.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1913, no. 9; Rotterdam 1913, no. 9; Florence 1913–14, no. 4; Naples 1914, no. 5; Milan 1916–17; Milan 1973–74, no. 160; Milan 1982–83, no. 94

LITERATURE: Carrieri 1950, pl. 51, p. 47 (*Antigrazioso*); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 43, p. 30; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 272; De Grada 1962, no. 95 (*Dimensione astratta,* 1914); Ballo 1964, no. 506; Bruno 1969, no. 161; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, no. 23, pl. 10; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 794

68. *Woman in a Café: Compenetrations of Lights and Planes*
Donna al caffè—Compenetrazioni di luci e di piani 1912

Oil on canvas
33⅞ × 33⅞ in. (86 × 86 cm.)
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

Although this painting was dated 1914 in the catalogue of the posthumous exhibition of Boccioni's works in 1916–17, Ballo (1964) ascribed it to 1912 on the grounds of stylistic affinities with the *Decomposition of Figures at a Table*, assigned to that year by the artist himself.

For Calvesi (1958) the forms composing this image are indebted to Picasso, with notable iconographic similarities to the Spanish artist's *Portrait of a Woman*, a painting that Henri de Pruraux published in *La Voce* in December 1911 and which Boccioni, an assiduous reader of that Florentine review, must have seen there.

In the present painting space has been subjected to a total deflagration into multiple elements fraught with movement and direction, and it is precisely this process that sharply distinguishes the Futurists—Boccioni in particular—from the Cubists. For Boccioni, "a picture by Picasso lacks law, lacks lyricism,

lacks will. It presents, unfolds, disrupts, splits into facets, multiplies the object's details to infinity. The splitting of the object and the fantastic variety of aspects that a violin, a guitar, a glass can assume in his picture . . . astonish us in the same way as does the scientific enumeration of the components of some object which, till now we had considered, out of ignorance or by tradition, only as a unified whole. This was a discovery that had to come about, that was necessary to art. It is the truly valuable outcome of a development. . . . Emotion in art calls for drama. Emotion, in modern painting and sculpture, sings of the gravitation, the displacement, the reciprocal attraction of forms, masses, and colors: which means the *movement*, the interpretation of forces."

In its schematic composition of forces and harsh opposition of lights and shadows, the woman's face in the present work recalls that in *Empty and Full Abstracts of a Head* (no. 62). The bottle and glass in the foreground suggest the same emphasis on form and the same break in continuity with the setting as in the *Still Life: Glass and Siphon* (no. 65). Two beams of light project a dazzling glare and exist as purely formal elements of exactly the same nature as the other lines that compose the painting.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 28 (ill.: 1914); Geneva 1920–21, no. 22; Macerata 1922, no. 3; Rome 1925, no. 14; Milan 1927, p. 23 (ill.); New York 1949 (ill. pl. 14; 1914?); Paris 1973, no. 24; Milan 1973–74, no. 163; Milan 1982–83, no. 88; Venice 1986, p. 136

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 39; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 164–65; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 373; De Grada 1962, no. 93 (*Scomposizione di figura di donna a tavola,* 1913); Bruno 1969, no. 157 (1912?); Caramel and Pirovano 1973, no. 22, pl. 13; Guzzi 1976, p. 127; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 795

69 A. *Elasticity*
Elasticità 1912

Oil on canvas
39⅜ × 39⅜ in. (100 × 100 cm.)
Pinacoteca di Brera (Collection Jucker), Milan

B. *Study for "Elasticity"*
Studio per Elasticità 1912

Pencil and gouache on paper
18¾ × 24¼ in. (47.7 × 61.6 cm.)
The Museum of Modern Art (Purchase), New York

When this painting was part of the 1913 show in the foyer of the Teatro Costanzi in Rome, Roberto Longhi remarked: "It is through these experiments in the essential directions of the material that one arrives at this *Elasticity* (*horse, rider,* and *landscape*), which is, let it be said in a loud voice, a masterpiece, and wherein what was inevitable is affirmed: the predominance of living curves. The springing arabesque from the horse's nostrils to its fetlocks, a source of great energy, moves forward, sharp and cutting, scything through space. . . . The yellow dust coils in undulations like gunpowder about to explode; the fields and houses rotating in the distance cast their furrows, their dizzying thrusts, toward the figure in the foreground in an admirably reversed perspective . . . ; the hollows of the sky are veiled in a haze of smoke that flattens out as it rises; the color, dense, scarlet, and dark, oozes toward the linear outline and shades off, quickly saturating each isolated blade of form. Here pure chromaticism, bringing together values of tone and values of shade, obtains results similar to those that Carrà, and Soffici even more, seek with a marginal chromaticism, alongside the absolute tone."

Sarfatti in *Gli Avvenimenti* (1916) also stressed the importance of the painting, especially in terms of the study of dynamic forces: "It does not propose to represent a moment of arrested movement, but the whole movement in progress. And at the same time the center, the ideal focus of the painting, is no



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69A

longer only in the eye and in the visual and emotional sensations of the artist who contemplates the spectacle from outside. It is instead both exterior and interior, since the artist also sinks into the vision and into the sensation of the man on horseback—it is not only the rider who moves but also the whole outside world, which, in a kind of frantic effort, participates in his motion."

Taylor (1961) called attention to the dynamic strength of the work: "In *Elasticity* planes seem to peel away from the forms, flowing gracefully into space. The horse and rider are not fragmented by an external light, but seem to dissolve in response to an internal force. The horse, for example, appears to have material substance, yet this we know only from the suggestions of the shifting planes. The limits of the form cannot be fixed. No longer do concrete objects resist the persuasive underlying movement; all is motion, and a sense of the object is given more through the nature of the action than through any suggestion of substance."

In the months when he was completing *Elasticity*, Boccioni was engaged in a disagreement with his French contemporaries, in particular Apollinaire and Delaunay, about the concepts of simultaneous contrasts and dynamism. Some time later, in August 1913, Boccioni declared: "We are the ones who have said, amid the ironic distrust of the critics, that modern life is the sole inspiration of a modern painter, and therefore of dynamism." In the present work the study of movement is accentuated, not only to express the artist's deeply held beliefs but also to oppose the static vision of Cubism.



69B

EXHIBITIONS: No. 69A—Rome 1913, no. 5; Rotterdam 1913, no. 5; Berlin 1913, no. 54; London 1914, no. 3; San Francisco 1915, no. 1141; Milan 1916–17, no. 51; Milan 1924, no. 28; Rome 1925, no. 18; Milan 1933; Berlin 1937; Rome 1948, no. 19; New York 1949 (ill. pl. 8); Rome 1953, no. 17 (1911); New York 1954, no. 13 (ill.); Kassel 1955, no. 66; Rome 1955–56, p. 56, no. 6; Munich 1957, no. 15; Rome 1959, no. 85; Venice 1960, p. 14, no. 34; New York 1961, p. 143, no. 47; Cologne 1962, no. 25 (cover ill.); Venice 1966, p. 11, no. 62; Los Angeles 1970–71, no. 6, pl. 180; Paris 1973, no. 23; Milan 1973–74, no. 169; Rome 1980–81, no. 7; Milan 1982– 83, no. 90; Verona 1985–86, no. 77; Venice 1986, p. 124

LITERATURE: No. 69A—Prezzolini 1913; Boccioni 1914, p. 463, no. 2 (ill.); Coquiot 1914, p. 65; Soffici 1914, n.p.; Sarfatti 1916; Sarfatti 1917; Marinetti 1927; Costantini 1933, p. 130; Dinamo Futurista 1933b; Apollonio 1950, pl. 9; Buzzi 1950, p. 31; Carrieri 1950, p. 59; Castelfranco and Valsecchi 1956, p. 71, pl. 2; Valsecchi 1950; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 45; Mazzariol 1958, p. 18; Calvesi 1958a, p. 165; Calvesi 1959, p. 27; De Micheli 1959, p. 240; Carrieri 1961, pl. 21; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 359; De Grada 1962, pl. 17; Ragghianti 1962, no. 392; Rosenblum 1962, pl. 30, p. 191; Ballo 1964, no. 498; Jullian 1966, p. 74; Martin 1968, no. 116; Taylor 1968, p. 82; Bruno 1969, no. 162a; Apollonio 1970, pl. 41; Birolli 1971, p. 103; Bortolon 1971, no. 60; Gerhardus 1977, no. 52; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 799

No. 69B—Taylor 1961b, no. 231; De Grada 1962, no. 71 (ill. reversed); Ballo 1964, no. 497 (ill. reversed); Bruno 1969, no. 162b; Calvesi 1973, no 44; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 798

70A. *Man at a Café Table, Paris*
Uomo a un tavolino da caffè 1911

Ink on paper
8⅛ × 5⅜ in. (20.6 × 13.7 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

B. *Analytical Study of a Woman's Head Against Buildings*
Studio di testa 1911–12

Ink on paper
11⅞ × 8¼ in. (30.2 × 21 cm.)
Signed center left: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Though very different, these two drawings sum up Boccioni's experiments during 1911 and 1912. The man seated at the small table retains objective aspects, although some details are barely suggested. The woman's head—once again that of the artist's mother—has been subjected to considerable deformation through the superimposition of planes and the simultaneous presence of interior and exterior. By faceting his lines Boccioni produced a formal solution very different from that seen in the drawing of the man. There is, however, some attempt in the first drawing to con-



70A

vey motion by repetition of lines and other elements around the face, and its curvature of lines conveys a greater feeling of plasticity and of volume than is evident in the second. In the *Woman's Head* the swiftly sketched and concisely rendered shapes seem to be worked out entirely on the surface and organized more on a pictorial than on a structural basis.

The rapid technique characteristic of India ink eliminates any indication of chiaroscuro, emphasizes each stroke, and instills a marked tension into every line. Whereas in the first drawing the linear intensity seems confined through a centripetal motion, in the second it shoots out into space with a centrifugal charge: The first is more the product of a speculative and theoretical way of working, while the second reflects the immediacy of hand in the act of sketching.



70B

EXHIBITIONS: No. 70B—New York 1973–74, no. 219; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 41; New Haven 1983, no. 27, p. 44

LITERATURE: No. 70A—Taylor 1961b, no. 232 (ca. 1913); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 380; Ballo 1964, no. 417 (pencil drawing with brown ink on reverse of ruled "Taverne de l'Hermitage" letterhead); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 826

No. 70B—Taylor 1961b, no. 188; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 262; Ballo 1964, no. 421; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 835

71. *Dynamism of a Human Body*
Dinamismo di un corpo umano 1913

Oil on canvas
39⅜ × 39⅜ in. (100 × 100 cm.)
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

In the series of "dynamisms" painted around 1913 Boccioni made considerably more out of the impact of color as such than in his preceding works. His color takes on a vivid and violent brilliance, and his paint becomes denser and more full-bodied. At the same time his principal aim became the exploration of spatial solutions. Space loses the three-dimensionality it had in his earlier works, which respected more-or-less traditional laws of perspective. Now, instead, the laws it conforms to are those implicit in the subject represented and its relationship with the reality around it.

"The plastic potentiality of the object," Boccioni wrote, "is its force, that is, its primordial psychology. This force, this primordial psychology, permits us to create in the picture a new subject whose aim is not the narrative reproduction of an episode but instead the coordination of the plastic values of reality, a purely architectonic coordination liberated from influences of literature or sentiment. In this prime state of motion, which I am speaking of as something separate although it is not so in reality, the object is not viewed in its relative motion but is conceived in its vital lines which reveal how it would decompose in accord with the tendencies of its forces."

This painting seems at first to represent abstract forms in an interweaving of tensions, but on closer inspection more objective elements can be made out—for example, bundles of muscles—from which the viewer can intuit a body in movement. Figure and space move in simultaneity, and the figure's contours are plastic representations of dynamic action. The artist controls the impetuous violence of the motion by balancing forms and colors. Lacerations and compenetrations of planes and violent chromaticisms make a dynamic unified composition in which form and light assume absolute value. In his studies of dynamism Boccioni deals with progressive stages—from the body's first entering into movement, to the body's increasingly destabilized bound or leap ahead in a spiraling expansion which dismembers its forms, to a concise rendering of the movement's direction, and finally to an almost total abstraction of lines, which thrust forward, creating an impression of arrow-swift speed.

EXHIBITIONS: Naples 1914, no. 26; Milan 1916–17, no. 48; Geneva 1920–21, no. 21; Milan 1924, no. 19 (or no. 25); Rome 1925, no. 405; Milan 1927, no. 10; Venice 1950, p. 59, no. 12; Munich 1957, p. 50, no. 17; Venice 1960, p. 16, no. 47; New York 1961, no. 56; Venice 1966, p. 12, no. 83; Rome 1968–69, no. 3; Paris 1973, no. 29; Milan 1973–74, no. 176; Milan 1979–80, no. 353; Milan 1980, p. 125; Milan 1982–83, no. 111; Frankfurt 1985, p. 29; Verona 1985–86, no. 78

LITERATURE: Boccioni 1914, n.p. (ill.: 1913); Nicodemi and Bezzola 1939, no. 2305; Carrieri 1950, p. 66; Pastonchi 1950, p. 40; Sironi and Zervos 1950, p. 13; Ungaretti 1950, pl. 2; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 52; Ballo 1956, p. 19; Calvesi 1958b, p. 166; De Micheli 1959, p. 240; Carrieri 1961, pl. 38; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 357; Ballo 1964, no. 543; Jullian 1966, p. 76; Calvesi 1967, p. 65; Magagnato 1967, p. 92; Martin 1968, no. 133; Bruno 1969, no. 168a; Birolli 1971, p. 125; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, p. 14, no. 25; Birolli 1983, no. 29; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 859; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 78, ill. 39



71

72. "Dynamism" Studies

A. *Study for "Unique Forms of Continuity in Space"*
Studio per Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio 1913

Pencil on paper
$6\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$ in. (15.5×12.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Gift of René d' Harnoncourt), New York

B. *Muscular Dynamism*
Dinamismo muscolare 1913

Pastel and charcoal on paper
$34 \times 23\frac{1}{4}$ in. (86.3×59.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
The Museum of Modern Art (Purchase), New York

C. *Dynamism of a Human Body*
Dinamismo di un corpo umano 1913

Ink on paper
$11\frac{1}{2} \times 9$ in. (29.2×22.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

D. *Muscular Dynamism*
Dinamismo muscolare 1913

Ink on paper
$11\frac{1}{2} \times 9$ in. (29.2×22.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

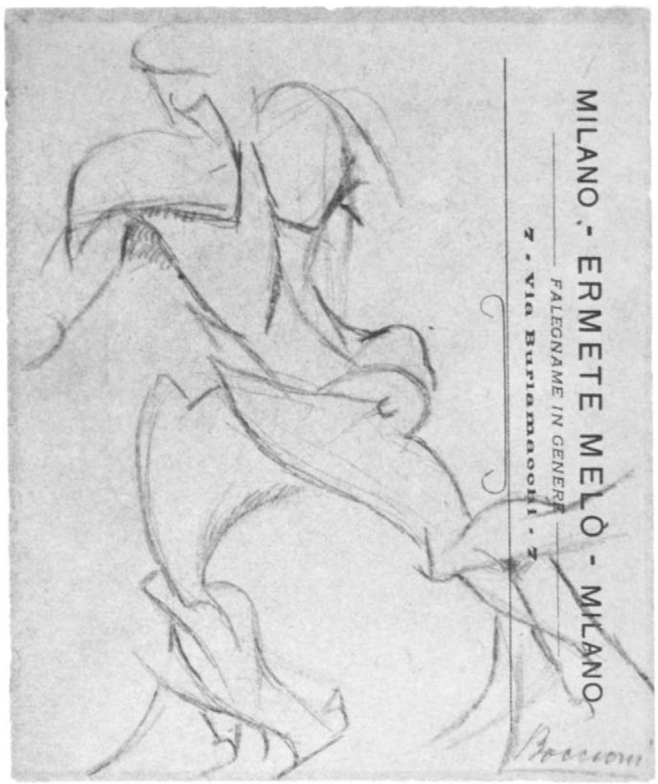
E. *Muscles in Velocity*
Muscoli in velocità 1913

Charcoal, ink, and gouache on paper
$12\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in. (31.1×24.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

F. *Dynamic Decomposition*
Scomposizione dinamica 1913

Ink and watercolor on paper
$11\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in. (30.2×24.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

EXHIBITIONS: No. 72A—Philadelphia 1980–81
No. 72B—New York 1949 (ill. pl. 16; Collection Benedetta Marinetti, Rome); New York 1961, no. 51, p. 94; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 47
No. 72C—Paris 1973, no. 30; Milan 1982–83, no. 110
No. 72D—Paris 1913; Rome 1913a; Florence 1913–14; London 1914; Milan 1973–74, no. 218; Milan 1982–83, no. 115
No. 72E—Milan 1973–74, no. 206; Milan 1982–83, no. 100
No. 72F—Milan 1973–74, no. 217; Milan 1982–83, no. 107



72A


72в



72C



72D

LITERATURE: No. 72A—Taylor 1961b, no. 237; Ballo 1964, no. 524; Bruno 1969, no. 168c; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 858

No. 72B—Boccioni 1914, n.p. (ill.); Longhi 1914, pp. 41–42 (ill.); Soffici 1914, n.p. (ill.); Marinetti 1927, n.p. (ill.); Carrieri 1950, pl. 73, p. 65; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 57; Ballo 1956, p. 17; Taylor 1961b, no. 236; De Grada 1962, no. 84; Ballo 1964, no. 523; Martin 1968, no. 158; Bruno 1969, no. 45; Golding 1972, no. 3, p. 11; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 860

No. 72C—Cahiers d'art 1950, p. 47 (ill.); Ungaretti 1950, pl. 3; Taylor 1961a, p. 98; Taylor 1961b, no. 240; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 299; Ballo 1964, no. 542; Bruno 1969, no. 168j; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 867

No. 72D—Lacerba 1914, p. 88 (ill.: *Voglio sintetizzare le forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*); Taylor 1961b, no. 241; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 310; Bruno 1969, no. 1681; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 869; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 75, ill. 37

No. 72E—Taylor 1961b, no. 238; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 305; Ballo 1964, no. 530; Martin 1968, no. 159; Calvesi 1973, no. 47; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 875

No. 72F—Taylor 1961b, no. 254; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 297; Ballo 1964, no. 538; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 882



72E



72F

73A. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Oil on canvas
27½ × 35⅜ in. (70 × 90 cm.)
Private collection
(THIS PAINTING IS NOT IN THE EXHIBITION.)

B. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Ink on paper
6 × 9½ in. (15.1 × 24.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

C. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Ink on paper
23⅝ × 22⅞ in. (60 × 58.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

D. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Ink on paper
8¼ × 12⅛ in. (21 × 30.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

E. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Tempera and ink on paper
8¼ × 12⅛ in. (21.1 × 30.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

F. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Ink wash and pencil on paper
8¼ × 12 in. (21 × 30.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Yale University Art Gallery (Gift of Collection Société Anonyme), New Haven



73A

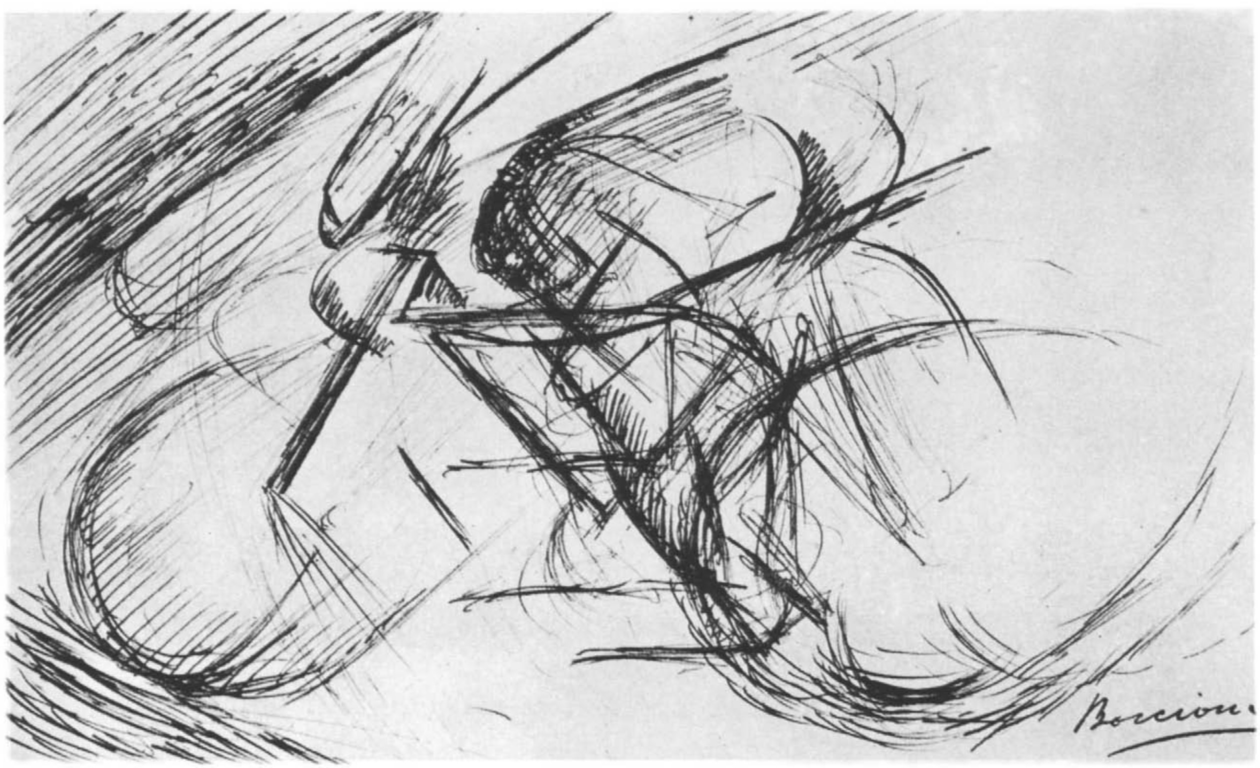
G. *Dynamism of a Cyclist*
Dinamismo di un ciclista 1913

Ink wash and pencil on paper
8¼ × 12 in. (21 × 30.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Yale University Art Gallery (Gift of Collection Société Anonyme), New Haven

"With the single unifying form [*forma unica*] that renders continuity in space," Boccioni wrote, "we are creating a form which is the sum of the potential developments of the three known dimensions. That is why we can render not merely a *measured and finite* fourth dimension but a continuous projection of the forces and the forms intuited in their infinite unfolding. In point of fact, the unifying single dynamic form we have proclaimed is nothing other than the suggestion of a form of motion that appears for an instant and then loses itself in the infinite succession of its changing varieties."

In these studies for the painting *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913) the forces of expansion increasingly resolve themselves into diagonal tension lines that indicate the cyclist's trajectory. Figure, bicycle, space form a single reality whose components are difficult to intuit. The bicycle's velocity is indicated by the reiteration of circular lines that reverberate, ricochet, rebound in the atmosphere like sound waves echoing and reechoing. The cyclist is swallowed up by and into the projection of his own forms which are themselves disintegrated by the motor energy unleashed.

In his preparatory studies Boccioni sketched shapes and outlines, indicated the bicycle's displacement in space, and drew the vehicle's wheels and bars and handles straining to the point of deformation in the effort of the race. In the painting, however, he unified all the charges and discharges of energy in a single global vision.



73B



73c



73d



73E

EXHIBITIONS: No. 73A—Florence 1913–14, no. 2; Rome 1914, no. 2 (*Dinamismo di un ciclista*) or no. 18 (*Ambiente emotivo di una bicicletta*); London 1914, no. 2, p. 23 (ill.); Naples 1914, no. 22(?); San Francisco 1915, no. 1140; Milan 1916–17, no. 47; Rome 1959, no. 89; Winterthur 1959, no. 22; New York 1961, no. 55, p. 96; Hamburg 1963, no. 27; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 15; Paris 1973, no. 31; Milan 1973–74, no. 171; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 15; Venice 1986, p. 134

No. 73B—Milan 1973–74, no. 172; Milan 1982–83, no. 117

No. 73C—Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 14; Milan 1973–74, no. 179

No. 73D—Paris 1973, no. 32; Milan 1973–74, no. 173; Milan 1982–83, no. 118

No. 73E—New York 1961, no. 54, p. 97; Milan 1973–74, no. 170; Milan 1982–83, no. 120

No. 73F—New York 1961, no. 53, p. 97; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 49; New Haven 1983, no. 35, p. 49

No. 73G—New Haven 1983, no. 86, p. 48

LITERATURE: No.73A—Boccioni 1914, n.p. (ill.); Soffici 1914, n.p. (ill.); Pastonchi 1950, p. 41; Valsecchi 1950 (ill.) (1912–14); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 51, p. 30; Castelfranco and Valsecchi 1956, p. 72, pl. 4; De Micheli 1959, p. 240; Francastel 1959, p. 2; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 362; De Grada 1962, no. 91; Ballo 1964, no. 558, p. 326; Martin 1968, no. 132; Bruno 1969, no. 170a; Birolli 1971, p. 154; Kozloff 1973, no. 88; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 81; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 884; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 87, ill. 45; Crispolti 1986, p. 17

No. 73B—Taylor 1961a, p. 97 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 259; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 370; Ballo 1964, no. 552; Martin 1968, no. 129; Bruno 1969, no. 170b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 886

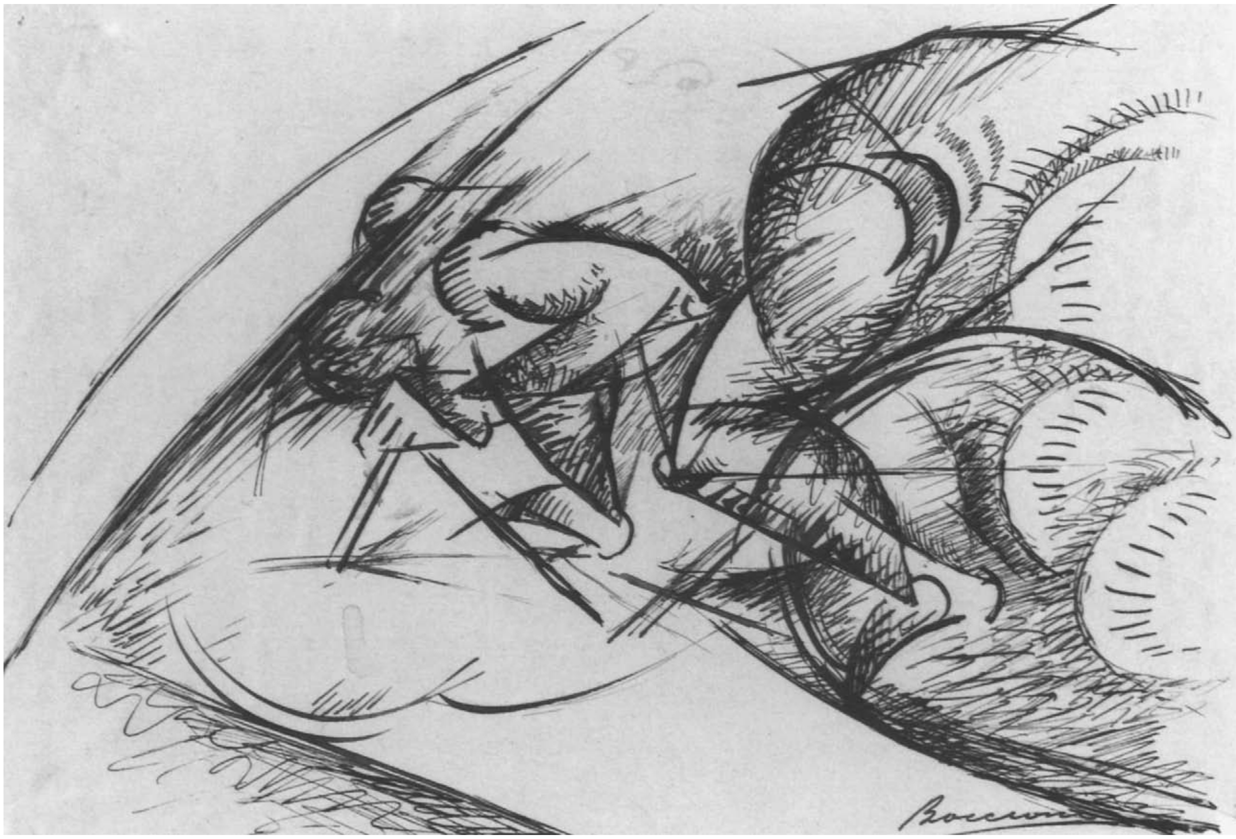
No. 73C—Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 365; Ballo 1964, no. 550; Bruno 1969, no. 170c; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 887

No. 73D—Taylor 1961a, p. 97 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 261; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 372; Ballo 1964, no. 554; Bruno 1969, no. 170d; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 888

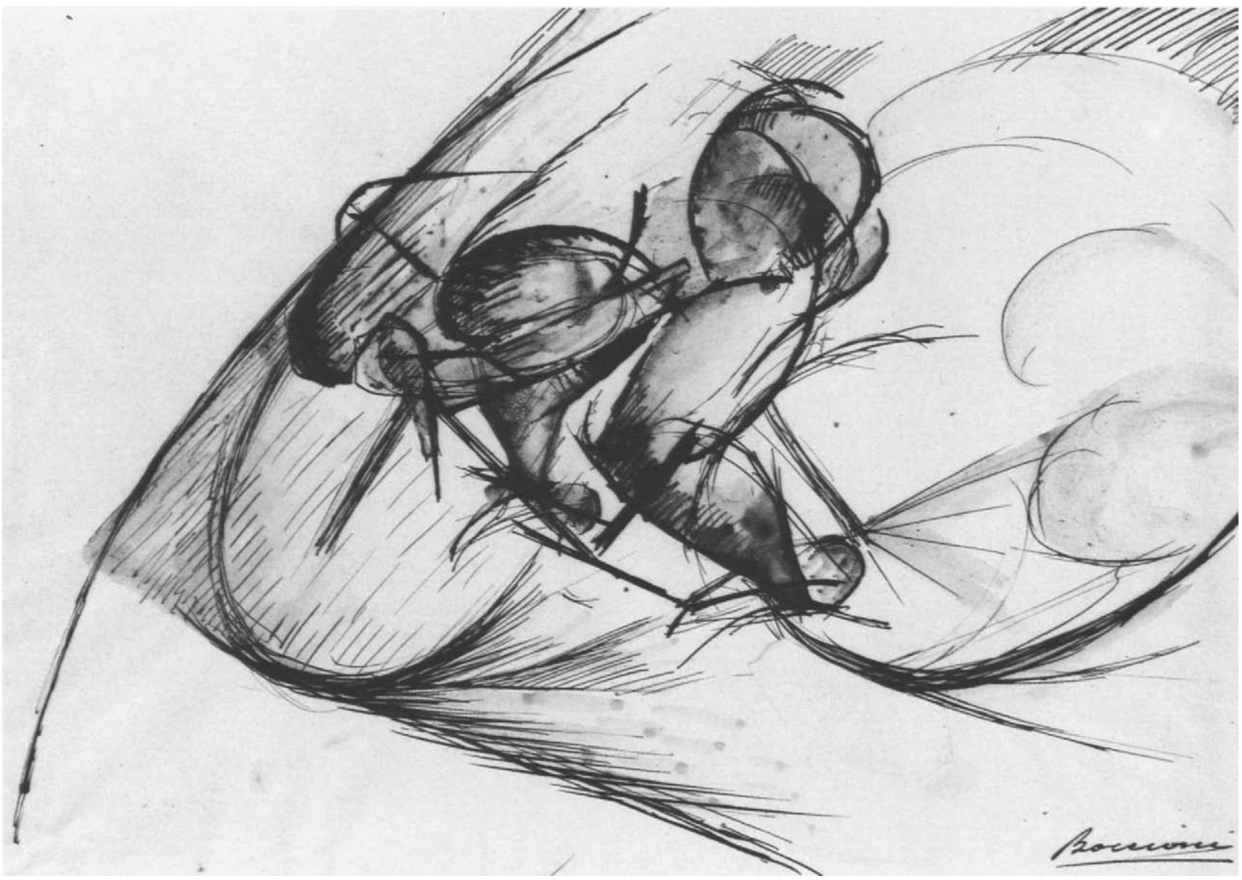
No. 73E—Taylor 1961b, no. 264; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 354; Ballo 1964, no. 557; Martin 1968, no. 130; Bruno 1969, no. 170e; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 889; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 88, ill. 46

No. 73F—Taylor 1961b, no. 260; Ballo 1964, no. 553; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 891

No. 73G—Taylor 1961b, no. 262; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 364; Ballo 1964, no. 555; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 892



73F



73G

74. *The Dynamism of a Soccer Player*
Dinamismo di un Foot-baller 1913

Oil on canvas
$76\frac{1}{8} \times 79\frac{1}{8}$ in. (193.4 × 201 cm.)
The Museum of Modern Art (The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967), New York

In this work Boccioni was mindful of Divisionist theory and laid out his composition along oblique lines and main diagonals that lead the light into the interior of the painting. The general conception profited from his investigations into the quantitative strength of color and the luminous possibilities inherent in the juxtaposition of different tones.

The painting bursts with vitality, and as the motion builds up within the image, it unleashes a powerful energy which arises out of a synthesis of light and movement. At the same time there is a high degree of plastic abstraction—some parts of the athlete seem to project more markedly and to take on a three-dimensionality. Large beams of light slash through the image and emit a luminescence which makes the colors even brighter. The beams also create a circular movement that combines with the player's dynamism to cancel out the figure's specific forms, thus attaining a maximum of impetus and power.

Compared with Boccioni's other paintings representing dynamic motion and the lines of force composing it, and in which the color is laid on with quite dense and broad brushwork, here the composition takes on light through the vibration of the tiny accents of color. While he did recognize some differences between the various sources of energy and acceleration, it was more as a matter of successive stages and degrees than of kind, of quantity more than quality. "It is true," he wrote, "that the wheels of a railroad carriage, the propeller of an airplane, have an extremely rapid movement in comparison with the legs of a man and a horse, but this is no more than a simple variation in form and rhythm. It is a question of degree of movement and above all a question of tempo."

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1914 (?); London 1914, no. 5; San Francisco 1915, no. 1143; Milan 1916–17, no. 50; Geneva 1920–21, no. 29; Milan 1924, no. 1; Rome 1925, no. 2; Milan 1933; Rome 1948, no. 15, pl. 13; New York 1954, no. 14; New York 1961, no. 50, p. 89; Paris 1980, p. 45; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 50; Venice 1986, p. 135

LITERATURE: Luzzatto 1924; Costantini 1933, p. 130; Costantini 1934, p. 195 (1912); Buzzi 1950, p. 30; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 59, p. 29; Calvesi 1958a, pp. 165–66; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 360; Ballo 1964, no. 560, p. 328; Martin 1968, no. 124; Bruno 1969, no. 171a; Gerhardus 1977, p. 86; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 895



74



75A

75A. *Plastic Dynamism: Horse + Houses*
Dinamismo plastico: cavallo + caseggiato 1913–14

Oil on canvas
15⅜ × 39⅝ in. (39 × 100.5 cm.)
Signed top left: Boccioni
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

B. *Horse*
Cavallo 1913–14

Watercolor on paper
14⅝ × 21⅝ in. (37.1 × 54.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Private collection

C. *Plastic Dynamism: "Horse + Houses"*
Studio per Cavallo + case 1913–14

Ink on paper
12⅞ × 16⅝ in. (32.7 × 42.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni; inscribed: DINAMISMO PLASTICO CAVALLO + CASE
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Eric Estorick

D. *Horse + Rider + Houses*
Cavallo + cavaliere + caseggiato
1913–14

Oil on canvas
41⅜ × 53⅛ in. (105 × 135 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna di Roma, Rome

E. *Study for "Horse + Rider + Houses"*
Studio per Cavallo + cavaliere + caseggiato
1913–14

Pencil and watercolor on paper
15¼ × 22⅜ in. (38.7 × 56.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

"A horse in movement," Boccioni wrote, "is not a stationary horse that moves but is a horse in movement, which is quite another thing and must be conceived and expressed as something completely different. Objects in movement have to be conceived apart from the possibility of motion they possess. This means that we have to find a form that can express this new absolute, speed, to which no genuine modern temperament can be indifferent. We have to study the aspects life has taken on through speed and the simultaneity that results from it."

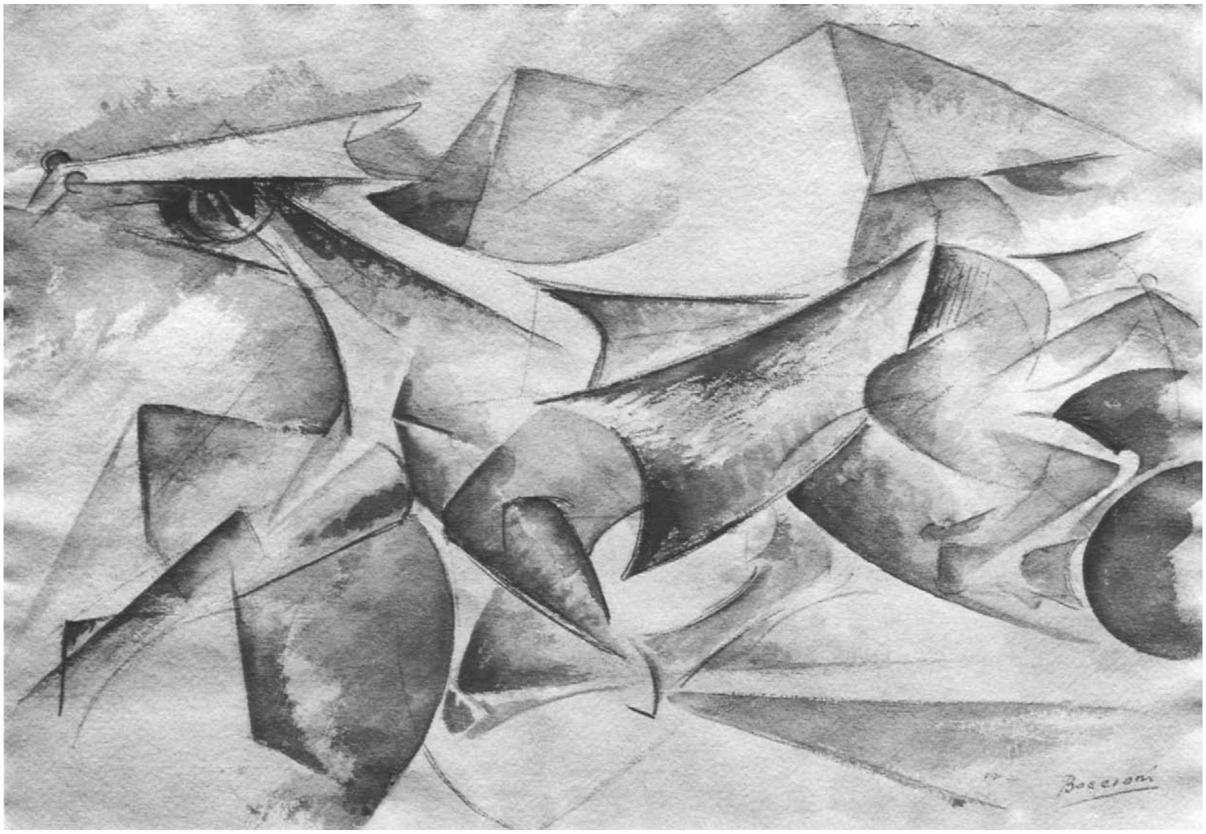
He specified further that dynamic form "is a kind of fourth dimension in painting and sculpture, which cannot be perfectly alive without the complete affirmation of the three dimensions that determine the volume: height, width, depth."

In *Plastic Dynamism: Horse + Houses* of 1913–14 (no. 75A) Boccioni accentuated constructive aspects and emphasized volumetric components by using regular and geometrical wedges of color. A narrow and exceptionally wide format plays its part in making the viewer see how the action unfurls and the plastic forms intermesh. Foreground and background are united in a single view, rhythmically cadenced by the pyramidal shapes in the upper part of the picture.

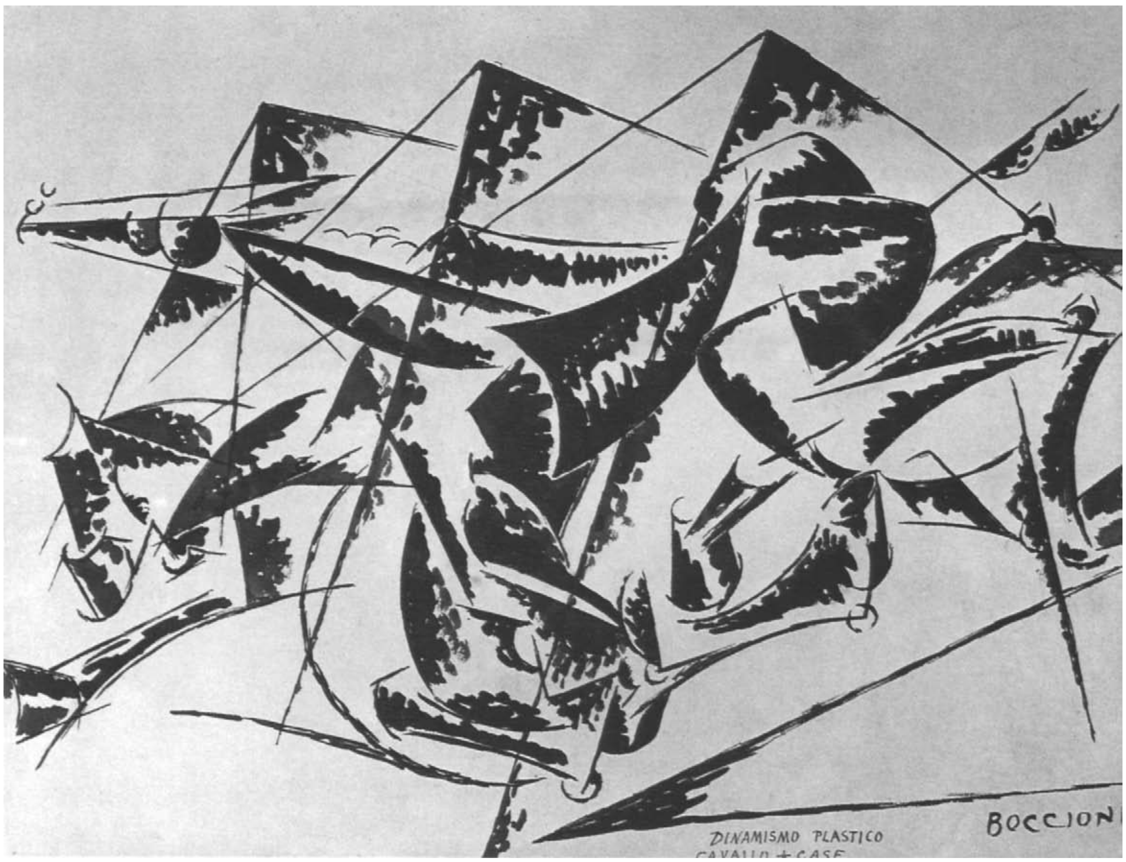
Both the watercolor and the ink drawing of a horse (nos. 75B and 75C) can be considered preparatory studies for the painting, not only because there is no rider but also because the structure of the image is built up on force-lines that are very much in evidence. Both studies, as it happens, have a greater impact than the painting itself: The forms appear better defined and less confused, and in the ink drawing in particular, the contrast between white and black emphasizes the way in which the image of the horse in swift movement interlaces with the houses' static contours. The animal's body, composed of cutout fragments, is supplely articulated like a piece of metal machinery with sharp, cutting edges—it seems to cleave the air in its taut, knifelike onrush.

In *Horse + Rider + Houses* (no. 75D) the forms that are so incisive in the Milan painting (no. 75A) seem to crumble away under a greater concern for color. The color, in fact, possesses the same constructive and analytical force as in Cézanne, whose works Boccioni was studying attentively in the months that led up to his new rethinking of form. The contours are no longer so pronounced nor does a concern with plastic values preponderate. The composition is worked out in primarily pictorial and painterly terms: The ultramarine blue establishes a dimension of depth, while the dynamism of the shapes and forms seems to dissolve away in the fluidity of paint and color, with the result that virtually nothing is left of the feeling of volume that characterized the Milan painting.

A study for the Rome painting has been identified on the basis of a general similarity of image as well as the presence of a rider (no. 75E). Here again the relationship between the various parts of the composition is much better defined and more concise than in the painting. Of particular note is the way in which the shapes of the houses push forward, forming a single plastic reality with the mass of the swiftly moving horse.



75B



75C



75D

EXHIBITIONS: No. 75A—Rome 1959, no. 81; Milan 1973–74, no. 185; Milan 1982-83, no. 129

No. 75C—New York 1961, no. 57; Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 26

No. 75D—Rome 1914; Rome 1925, no. 3 (*Cavallo, Cavaliere, Caseggiato*); Venice 1950, p. 58, no. 5 (*Cavallo, cavaliere e caseggiato*); Bologna 1951; Rome 1953, no. 20 (*Cavallo + Casa*); Rome 1959, no. 79 (ca. 1913); New York 1961, pp. 101, 144, no. 60 (1914); Venice 1966, p. 13, no. 95 (1914); Düsseldorf 1974, no. 15; Milan 1982–83, no. 128 (1914); Verona 1985–86, no. 80

No. 75E—New York 1961, no. 59, p. 100; Paris 1973, no. 35; Milan 1973–74, no. 188; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 94; Milan 1982–83, no. 125

LITERATURE: No. 75A—Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 61, p. 30; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 374; De Grada 1962, pl. 19; Ballo 1964, no. 569; Martin 1968, no. 197; Taylor 1968, p. 82; Bruno 1969, no. 176a; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, no. 28, pl. 26; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 902

No. 75B—Pacini 1977, fig. 11, p. 160; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 906

No. 75C—Balza 1915 (*Dinamismo plastico* [*Cavallo + case*]); Taylor 1961b, no. 277 (1914); Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 29; Mazzariol 1959, p. 14; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 352; Ballo 1964, no. 572; Bruno 1969, no. 177d; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 907

No. 75D—Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 60 (*Cavallo + Cavaliere + Case*); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 343; De Grada 1962, no. 88 (1913); Ragghianti 1962, p. 168, no. 395; Ballo 1964, no. 568 (1914); Martin 1968, no. 198 (1914); Bruno 1969, no. 174; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 908; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 86, ill. 43

No. 75E—Cahiers d'art 1950, p. 50 (ill.); Taylor 1961b, no. 275; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 350; Ballo 1964, no. 565; Bruno 1969, no. 176c; Birolli 1971, p. 170; Calvesi 1973, no. 55; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 910



75E

76 A. *The Street Pavers*
I selciatori 1914

Oil on canvas
39⅜ × 39⅜ in. (100 × 100 cm.)
Signed bottom left: UB
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

B. *Study for "The Street Pavers": Man Laying Paving Stones*
Studio per I selciatori 1914

Ink on paper
5¾ × 8¼ in. (14.6 × 21 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

C. *Study for "The Street Pavers": Two Workmen*
Studio per I selciatori 1914

Ink on paper
5⅜ × 8⅛ in. (13.7 × 20.6 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Ascribed to the year 1909 by Valsecchi (1950) and Carrieri (1950), to 1910 by De Grada (1962), and to 1911 by Taylor (1961) and Martin (1968), the present painting is included among the works of 1914 in the monograph by Argan and Calvesi (1953), and that date is accepted by Ballo (1964), Bruno (1969), and Calvesi and Coen (1983). In support of her earlier date Martin argues: "While still ignorant of the actual appearance of Cubist painting, Boccioni evolved here a highly intelligent combination of angular, transparent planes and a freely improvised color dynamism based on the Divisionism of the *Città che sale*. This time his interpretation of a working scene had no anecdotal overtones, but centered on a variety of physical sensations which he sought to express." However, the style and form of this work make the later dating of 1914 more probable.

Embittered by the polemics with his Futurist comrades after the publication of his book *Pittura, scultura futuriste*, Boccioni abandoned here his exploration of dynamism in favor of a study in the decomposition of the image by means of color. Toward that end, he returned to a palette of strong hues juxtaposed but not superimposed and laid on with widely spaced brushstrokes that let the prepared ground of the canvas show through.

Argan has written an acute assessment of this picture: "In *Street Pavers* Pointillism in the Seurat manner likewise disappears; the brushstrokes become sparser; the pictorial texture is torn to shreds; the foreshortenings are so rapid and abbreviated that the figures each become virtually a separate compact mass, are reduced to suggestions of motion, dissolve in the colored space, and are no longer anything but rotating shreds of color. In no work more than this are the two terms of the dilemma of vision versus expression so close, so much on the verge of a synthesis, and the content newer, more fully invented, more full of the force of inspiration."

Except for the area at the lower left laid



76A



76B



76C

on with long streaks of color, the entire space is crammed with shapes whose interconnections are difficult to decipher. Apart from the kneeling figure at the lower right, the rest of the representation strikes the eye as a tangled mass of colors.

The present studies are two of at least four that Boccioni made for *The Street Pavers.*

EXHIBITIONS: No. 76A—Milan 1916–17, no. 10; Milan 1924, no. 13; New York 1949 (ill. pl. 1; 1910 (?); Collection Romeo Toninelli, Milan); New York 1961, no. 31, p. 44 (1911); New York 1973–74, no. 27 (ill.: ca. 1911); Düsseldorf 1974, no. 92; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 38 (ca. 1911); New Haven 1983, no. 18, pl. 3 (1911)

No. 76B—New York 1973–74, no. 201; New Haven 1983, no. 19, p. 84 (1911)

LITERATURE: No. 76A—Carrieri 1950, pl. 16, p. 16, p. 45 (1909?); Valsecchi 1950 (1909?); Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 20, p. 34; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 197 (signed lower right "UB"); De Grada 1962, pl. 9 (1910); Ballo 1964, no. 580; Martin 1968, no. 73; Bruno 1969, no. 178a; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 85; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 911

No. 76B—Taylor 1961b, no. 180 (1911); Ballo 1964, no. 326 (1910); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 914

No. 76C—Taylor 1961b, no. 179 (1911); Ballo 1964, no. 327 (1910); Birolli 1971, p. 232; Calvesi 1973, no. 57; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 915

77. *Dynamism of a Man's Head*
Dinamismo di una testa d'uomo 1914

Pencil, ink, tempera, and collage on canvas
12¼ × 12¼ in. (31 × 31 cm.)
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea,
Palazzo Reale, Milan

Because of stylistic similarities with *The Drinker* (no. 78), this mixed-medium work can be assigned to 1914 when Boccioni returned to a Picasso-like approach in which the image was defined through its volumes. This new path led him to reconsider his system of formal values according to the principles exemplified in Cézanne's works.

In the summer of 1914 Boccioni wrote to Emilio Cecchi, a man of letters, about his new aesthetic direction: "I am ever more convinced of the inevitability of conceiving the world plastically as *continuity*. I see it as a logical (mathematically logical) extension and development of the plastic conceptions of the past. Unfortunately the task appears to me ever more grave. I feel I am a little too alone in this . . . and the disbelief and indifference [of others] leave me perplexed. At times I no longer understand the why and wherefore of the battle to be fought."

In this work Boccioni delves deep into an analysis of the image's linear structure. The face is placed into the rather unusual square format through a calculated network of proportions and viewpoints. The space is constructed around the triangular head, which divides the canvas into three areas, with the central part emphasized. The debt to Picasso is explicit, particularly in technique.

EXHIBITIONS: Rome 1959, no. 82 (*Scomposizione d'una testa d'uomo*); New York 1961, p. 144, no. 63; Venice 1966, p. 13, no. 97; Rome 1968–69, no. 4 (*Scomposizione di una testa*); Paris 1973, no. 36; Milan 1973–74, no. 183; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 11; Milan 1982–83, no. 133; Verona 1985–86, no. 81

LITERATURE: Nicodemi and Bezzola 1939, no. 2309; Pastonchi 1950, p. 33 (*Dynamisme d'une tête de femme*, 1912); Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 64; Carrieri 1961, no. 22; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 390 (*Scomposizione di una testa*); Ballo 1964, cover, no. 577; Martin 1968, no. 204; Bruno 1969, no. 180; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, p. 15, no. 30; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 918

78. *The Drinker*
Il bevitore 1914

Oil on canvas
33⅞ × 34¼ in. (86 × 87 cm.)
Signed bottom left: U. Boccioni
Pinacoteca di Brera (Collection Jucker), Milan

This is a difficult work, one that reflects study and preparation for a new working phase. The dynamic thrust expressed in previous paintings is transformed into a more static image; the sense of continuity is entrusted to the sequence of planes and to the perspective. Plasticity is achieved by color, playing on variations of yellow, which changes and takes on tones of brown, heightened by the red of the hat and the green of the bottle.

The compositional sensibility of Cézanne provided the new point of departure for Boccioni. The figure in the present painting could be a reinterpretation of one of Cézanne's cardplayers, employing a more formal and sculptural approach. A feeling of melancholy monumentalism pervades the painting, underscored by the drinker's lowered head.

A gouache on paper (Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York) treats this same subject. The composition is less compact than in the oil; there are larger diminishing planes and less of a tendency to dwell on the formal elements.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 12; Rome 1953, no. 24; New York 1954, no. 16; Rome 1955, p. 55, no. 3; New York 1961, no. 118; Hamburg 1963, no. 29; Venice 1966, p. 13, no. 100; Düsseldorf 1974, no. 88; Verona 1985–86, no. 82; Venice 1986, p. 137

LITERATURE: Marinetti 1927, n.p. (ill.); Benet 1949, no. 51 (*El Bebedor*, 1909); Carrieri 1950, p. 71; Pastonchi 1950, p. 43; Argan and Calvesi 1953, cover, pl. 66; Castelfranco and Valsecchi 1956, p. 72, pl. 7; Calvesi 1958a, p. 166; Carrieri 1961, pl. 39; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 383; De Grada 1962, no. 94; Ballo 1964, no. 575; Calvesi 1967, p. 69; Magagnato 1967, p. 95; Bruno 1969, no. 181a; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 920



77



78



79

79. *Under the Trellis in Naples*
Sotto la pergola a Napoli 1914

Oil and collage on canvas
33⅛ × 33⅛ in. (84 × 84 cm.)
Signed bottom left: U. Boccioni
Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Palazzo Reale, Milan

This work is one of those that reflect Boccioni's new interest in three-dimensional rendering. The paint is used more transparently than in *The Drinker* (no. 78), in part to convey more effectively the relation of each plane to the others. The colors tend to bright, even shrill tonalities, as in the strong yellow of the foreground figure. Although he is interested here in the decomposition of the image, Boccioni did not disown his earlier theories; he continued to explore the concept of compenetration which he had defined as "an intersection of lines and volumes of infinite varieties of thickness, weight, transparency, which in their turn vary the chromatic tone, that is, the simultaneous product of the pure complementary colors."

In this 1914 work Boccioni summed up the ideas propounded in his *Pittura, scultura futuriste*, published earlier that year. The rhythm of the composition is broken up by the lines forming the various objects, thus negating the three-dimensional aspect suggested by the painting's profusion of curves.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 11 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Geneva 1920–21, no. 19 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Milan 1924, no. 16 (*Sotto il pergolato*); Milan 1927, no. 9 (*Pergolato*); Venice 1950, p. 59, no. 15 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Rome 1953, no. 22; Blois 1959, p. 24, no. 8; Venice 1966, p. 13, no. 101 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Milan 1973–74, no. 181 (*Pergola a Napoli*); Milan 1982–83, no. 135 (*Sotto la pergola a Napoli* or *Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Verona 1985–86, no. 83

LITERATURE: Nicodemi and Bezzola 1939, no. 2301; Carrieri 1950, p. 71 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Pastonchi 1950, p. 42; Valsecchi 1950 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 65; Calvesi 1958a, p. 166; Carrieri 1961, pl. 42; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 378 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); De Grada 1962, pl. 20 (*Sotto il pergolato a Napoli*); Ballo 1964, no. 581; Calvesi 1967, p. 354; Magagnato 1967, p. 94; Martin 1968, no. 206; Bruno 1969, no. 182; Birolli 1971, p. 172; Caramel and Pirovano 1973, p. 15, no. 31; Birolli 1983, no. 35; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 922; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 95, ill. 51

80A. *The Two Friends*
Le due amiche 1914–15

Oil on canvas
79½ × 59⅝ in. (202 × 151.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Assitalia—Le Assicurazioni d'Italia, Rome

B. *Interior with Two Female Figures*
Interno con due figure femminili 1915

Watercolor, tempera, ink, and pencil on cardboard
25⅞ × 18⅞ in. (65.7 × 47.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

The present canvas is often considered a double portrait of Boccioni's mother and sister, but this painting in fact depicts two of the artist's friends—Luisa Hammerschlag Ruberl and Betsy Baer. The two women, who were sisters-in-law, belonged to the cultured and enlightened German upper middle class; they lived in Milan because their families had commercial interests there. Betsy was a cousin of the artist's friend Vico Baer who for many years stood by him and extended financial help as well. Since the two families are known to have moved back to Germany at the beginning of 1915, the date of 1916 proposed by Ballo and Bruno is obviously incorrect.

The likelihood that the painting was executed in Boccioni's studio in Milan is borne out by the presence in the background, in the



80A

center and behind the seated woman's head, of two of his sculptures in plaster. Although the forms are only roughly indicated, the one to the fore with its flattened shape can be identified as *Empty and Full Abstracts of a Head* and the other with its staggered spiral as *Force-Forms of a Bottle*.

At this point in his career Boccioni was turning his attention once again to chromatic decomposition and luminous refraction; he did so with the same deep commitment that he had had in the years before he became preoccupied with the idea of dynamic tensions. Insofar as the present work returns to the Divisionist approach, it can be thought of as a link between his pre-Futurist and his final phase. The color, which has a vitalistic, joyous explosiveness, is treated in a manner that recalls *The Three Women* (no. 41) of 1909. Light again becomes the prime mover of the entire representation, the factor that unifies objects and figures in a single vision. In this new phase concern with color was again one of Boccioni's chief interests, and his last works show his further development toward control of the volumetric and constructive aspects that began to take on importance for him again beginning in 1914.

Interior with Two Female Figures has much in common with *The Two Friends*: the same vertical format and the same composition with an older woman seated in the foreground —here probably Boccioni's mother—and the other woman standing behind her at the left. Yet the image is realized in an entirely different manner. In *Interior* planes are tilted and even distorted; the figure of the older woman projects forward while the standing figure seems pulled into the background, as if being swallowed by a force that deforms all the other elements and falsifies the relationship between indoors and outdoors.

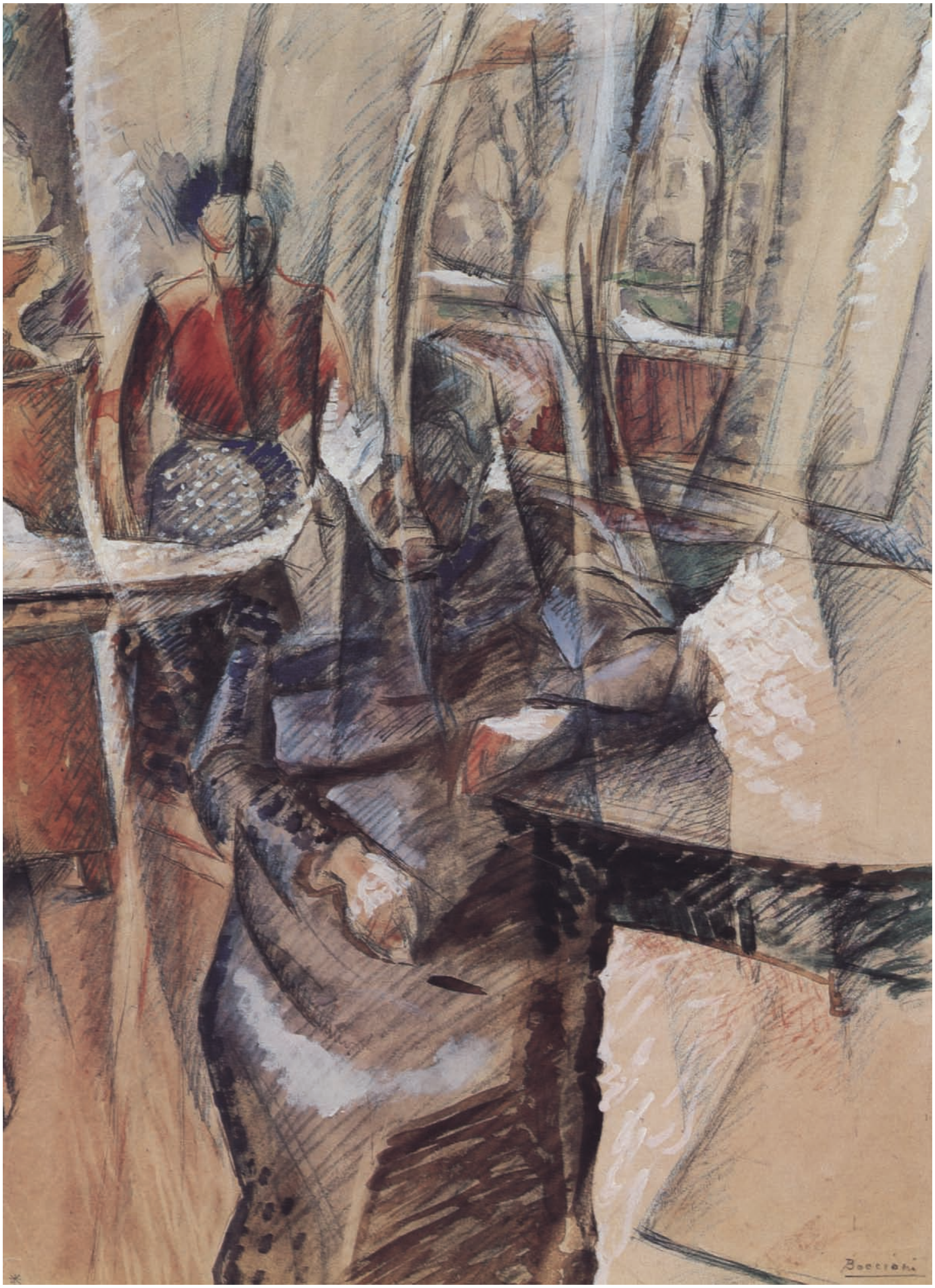
"Rendering the atmosphere in place of the figure," Boccioni had written, "means conceiving bodies not as isolated in space but as more or less compact nuclei of one and the same reality, because one needs to keep in mind that the distances between one object and another are not empty spaces but continuities of matter which differ only in intensity and which we reveal with forms or directions that correspond to neither photographic truth nor cool analytical reality, since those must always remain traditional experiences." Here then, in this image realized in a period of complete transition, he had not yet abandoned his experimentation with compenetration of planes and with simultaneity.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 80A—Milan 1916–17, no. 77 (ill.: *Le due amiche*; listed as *Le amiche*, 1914); Rome 1987, p. 19

No. 80B—Newcastle upon Tyne 1972, p. 28; Milan 1973–74, no. 225; Milan 1982-83, no. 140

LITERATURE: No. 80A—Sarfatti 1917, p. 43 (ill.); Costantini 1933, p. 129; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 67, p. 36 (Collection Ruberl, Frankfurt); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 336 (Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan); Ballo 1964, no. 596, p. 386 (1916); Bruno 1969, no. 190 (*Interno con la sorella e la madre* [*Le due amiche*], 1916); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 923

No. 80B—Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 68, p. 32; Taylor 1961b, no. 292; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 394; Ballo 1964, no. 594; Bruno 1969, no. 189; Birolli 1971, p. 213; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 937



80в

81. *Lancers' Charge*
Carica di lancieri 1914–1915

Tempera and collage on cardboard
12⅝ × 19¾ in. (32.1 × 50.2 cm.)
Pinacoteca di Brera (Collection Jucker), Milan

The collage was probably executed in late 1914 and early 1915. The newspaper clipping in the upper right corner bears the date January 4, and the work was published for the first time in January 1915 in the magazine *La Grande Illustrazione.* Aroused by the outbreak of World War I, Boccioni joined Marinetti in organizing demonstrations urging Italian action against Austria; in September 1914 they had been arrested for burning Austrian flags on the stage of the Teatro dal Verme in Milan. During these months Boccioni largely abandoned artistic activity and devoted himself primarily to politics: "I want to work but the anxiety that grips everybody perhaps prevents me. . . . I should go to the country but . . . and the war?" (letter, September 22, 1914).

In early 1915 other Futurists, among them Severini and Carrà, also chose to paint scenes influenced by the climate of war, and they imbued these bellicose images with extreme emotional tension.

In the present work Boccioni again uses dynamic thrusts, which are, however, less resolved in the spatial involvement of plastic volumes. The composition is based on diagonal elements, and the force-lines are discharged on the painting's left side. The horse in the foreground is echoed by numerous others, which form a compact but indistinct swarm. The lances of the horsemen are intersected by bayonets and by the gunfire of the soldiers hidden in the trenches at the bottom left. The sense of drama is communicated by the absence of sharp coloristic notes and by the repetition of metallic grays, harsh as the typographical characters that act as foundation to the scene. The insistent rhythm and violent action of the cavalry culminate in the horse plunging toward the decisive clash.

EXHIBITIONS: New York 1949 (ill. pl. 15; Collection Adriano Pallini, Milan); New York 1954, pl. 17; New York 1961, no. 66, p. 114; Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972, p. 20; Paris 1973, no. 37; Milan 1973–74, no. 224; Milan 1982–83, no. 136; Venice 1986, p. 138

LITERATURE: Cahiers d'art 1950, p. 46 (ill.); Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 33; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 391; Rosenblum 1962, no. 132, pp. 188, 192; Ballo 1964, no. 582; Martin 1968, no. 214; Bruno 1969, no. 183; Birolli 1971, p. 319; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 147, p. 180; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 925; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 98, ill. 51

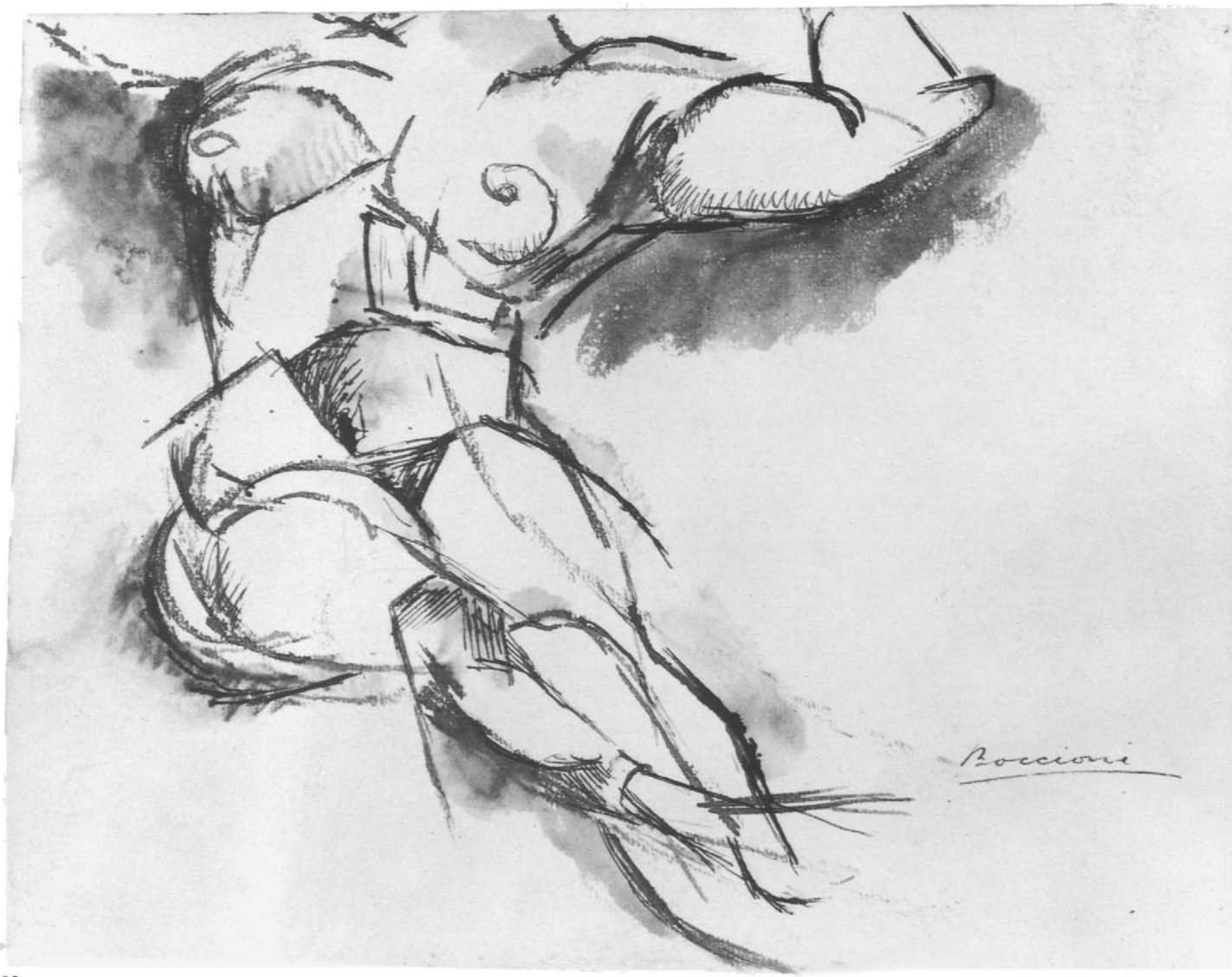
82. *Study of a Nude*
Studio di nudo 1915

Ink and ink wash on paper
9⅝ × 12⅛ in. (24.4 × 30.8 cm.)
Signed lower right: Boccioni
Civico Gabinetto dei Disegni, Castello Sforzesco, Milan

For some months in 1915 Boccioni went through a short-lived neo-Cubist phase during which he showed renewed engagement in figuration. This nude figure demonstrates the artist's revived interest in sculpture and in a formal exploration using a syntax that recalls


Punti d'appoggio tedeschi
presi dai francesi
Progressi in Alsazia
IN FRANCIA E NEL BELGIO La guerra

81



82

Picasso's very personal language. To this tense schematic rendering, he brought a profound expressiveness, at once soft and penetrating and thus very much the product of the drawing technique itself. The nude body is forcefully rendered, thrust forward in a direct, almost harsh way.

Here Boccioni is seen transforming his concept of space: The dynamic impulse has been modified by a constructive, synthetic approach in which the subject as such resumes the importance it had in his earlier works. There is nothing cold or mechanical about this composition; its lines vibrate with an emotional sensitivity that is technically rooted in the different ways in which the ink has been used.

EXHIBITION: Milan 1982–83, no. 138

LITERATURE: Taylor 1961b, no. 288; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 312; De Grada 1962, no. 97; Ballo 1964, no. 584; Calvesi 1973, no. 59; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 927

83 A. *Plastic Synthesis of a Seated Figure (Silvia)* *Sintesi plastica di figura seduta (Silvia)* 1915

Oil on canvas
33⅛ × 25¼ in. (84 × 64 cm.)
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna di Roma, Rome

B. *Silvia* 1915

Ink on paper
25⅜ × 18⅝ in. (64.5 × 47.3 cm.)
Signed top right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

Seven months after the artist's death the present painting was discussed by Margherita Sarfatti in the March–April 1917 issue of the review *Vita d'Arte*: "Here we are already well beyond the more or less curious and interesting tentatives; we have got over the more or less successful experiments in pictorial chemistry. Look at that face stripped down to two traits and a few essential planes; at the three large folds in the garment which eliminate yet none the less imply all those hundred and forty-three folds, pleats, and pleatlets of the real dress that a big little man like Meissonier and the mob of vulgar painters of yesterday and today would have worn themselves out rendering in the greatest possible number, some more, some less, each according to his degree of ability and conscientiousness but certainly not in accord with that severe concept of choice customarily designated under the name of 'style.' Here on the contrary, for anyone who knows how to look, not a line smacks of whim or chance. Not one could be altered or shifted without throwing the economy and harmony of the entire work of art off balance. In the same way in Greek tragedy not a phrase or word of the dialogue can be changed or suppressed with impunity and without damage. Here we are beyond anything handed down and arbitrary: We are already in the realm of necessity. And the [lesser] painter's skillfulness, that puerile little facility with its air of saying: Look at me, how good I am! —here they no longer exist. They decamp before the austerity of expression brought up from the depths and delved into with all the artist's altruistic passion for art, with all the fervor of idealism of which his soul is capable and all the experience of how to do things that he acquired during long years of labor."

Along with a reproduction of the painting, Sarfatti's article included illustrations of two watercolors she identified as first and second studies for the *Plastic Synthesis of a Seated Woman* (her title). She would return to the painting in an article in the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* on March 14, 1924 (in 1924 the canvas was acquired by the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna of Rome from Signor Emanuele Castelbarco). There she held it up as the most complete example of Boccioni's return to figuration: "The *Figure of a Seated Woman* anticipates with masterly audacity certain important endeavors rendered popular by the most modern French painting. The so-called 'dynamism,' that is, the extremist and romantic residue of the most advanced Impressionism, is completely abandoned here. . . . The calm feminine figure posed in an armchair is already a sign of prudent approaches to a renewal no longer external and sensational but profound and intimate, where that note of expression and human feeling that Boccioni had the merit of never forgetting is no longer a convulsive cry and alarming mimicry (as in the unbalanced *Mourning*) but is a reflective spontaneity of gesture and smile. It is an instinctive and at the same time fully conscious choice that is on the way to defining itself as a style."



83A



83в

The present image has much in common with the portrait of his wife with a fan that Cézanne painted in 1886–88, a work Boccioni must have seen in 1912 when he and Severini visited the Steins on the rue de Fleurus in Paris (it then belonged to Gertrude and Leo Stein and she kept it when her brother moved to Tuscany). The similarity lies not only in the figure's position but also in the choice of a palette that Boccioni seems to have instinctively taken from his source. Cézanne's reds and blues are used here but broken up in a way that conveys a feeling of chiaroscuro and some impression of volume. In general plan the two pictures are quite similar, although Boccioni's Silvia faces in the opposite direction. The light source also differs: In Boccioni's portrait it appears to come from outside; in Cézanne's, it seems internal to the work itself. In this final phase of Boccioni's activity Cézanne became his paragon, touchstone, ultimate measure. What he learned about form from studying that great master's work induced him to reconsider the relationship between volume and color and to reexamine the use of light in the Post-Impressionist tradition.

In the study for *Plastic Synthesis of a Seated Figure* there is greater emphasis on firm linework to define the figure's contours. The rapid diagonal brushstrokes modulate the accents of chiaroscuro and construct an image with something of the same severity one senses in the woman's expression.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 83A—Milan 1916–17 (ill.: *Sintesi plastica di figura seduta*; title not included in exhibition list; no. 237, *Figura di donna seduta* [?]); Geneva 1920–21, no. 18; Milan 1924, no. 12 (*Donna seduta* [*Sintesi plastica*])

LITERATURE: No. 83A—Sarfatti 1917, p. 47 (ill.); Luzzatto 1924; Sarfatti 1924; Argan and Calvesi 1953, no. 70, p. 29; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 388; De Grada 1962, pl. 21; Ballo 1964, no. 588, p. 372; Bruno 1969, no. 186; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 928

No. 83B—Sarfatti 1917, p. 46 (ill.: *Secondo studio per "Sintesi plastica di una donna seduta"*); Taylor 1961b, no. 293; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 392; Ballo 1964, no. 592, p. 372; Bruno 1969, no. 185b; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 930

84A. *Head of the Artist's Mother*
La madre 1915

Pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper
12¼ × 9½ in. (31.1 × 24.1 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

B. *The Artist's Mother*
La madre 1915

Charcoal and watercolor on paper
25⅝ × 20⅞ in. (65.1 × 53 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

These portraits display a strong feeling for volumes. One, however, is based on curving lines and is very much more schematic, while the other does more to bring out the volumes of the features. The broken linework in the second drawing creates a more dynamic and monumental impact recalling the hand of Cézanne. When Boccioni attacked the Cubists for their overly static approach, he accused them of misinterpreting Cézanne's aesthetic conception: "Instead of setting fixed limits to objects, as artists did before Impressionism, the objects must be interpreted in their reciprocal formal influences, in the gravitation of the masses, in the direction of the forces. The Cubists construct a definitive by interpreting Cézanne's teachings in a negative sense. Interpreted thus, Cézanne becomes the source of a definitive position which is a dead stop, if not a step backward. There was in Cézanne the danger found in all intellectual artists: a gap open to tradition. In Cézanne we have continual clas-



84A



84B

sical overtures of the museum. Seduced by this, the Cubists have exaggerated Cézanne's famous advice to return to the cube, the sphere, the cylinder. They have taken literally Cézanne's statement, 'Il faut faire le musée devant la nature,' and thus have forgotten nature and turned out museum pieces. They have exaggerated Cézanne's coloring and, despising Impressionist chromaticism, have emphasized pure chiaroscuro, seasoning it with French grays and cold tones."

Even in this late phase of great spiritual crisis and return to traditional formal values, Boccioni did not abandon his theories of the dynamism of the image. For all its emphasis on volumetric decomposition, heightened by unexpected touches of color dashed in with watercolor, the second drawing does in fact escape the static inertness Boccioni criticized in the Cubists.

EXHIBITIONS: No. 84A—New York 1961, no. 61, p. 100 (1914); New York 1973–74, no. 228; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 52; New Haven 1983, no. 29, p. 46 (1914)

No. 84B—Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 53; New Haven 1983, no. 37, pl. 5

LITERATURE: No. 84A—Taylor 1961b, no. 278 (1914); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 277; Ballo 1964, no. 587; Bruno 1969, no. 187b; Calvesi 1973, no. 62; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 932

No. 84B—Taylor 1961b, no. 295 (1915–16); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 270; Ballo 1964, no. 590; Calvesi 1973, no. 61; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 936

85. *Ferruccio Busoni*
Ritratto del Maestro Ferruccio Busoni 1916

Oil on canvas
69¼ × 47¼ in. (176 × 120 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Boccioni 1916
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna di Roma, Rome

By 1912 Boccioni was in touch with the composer Ferruccio Busoni, one of the first to buy his paintings (during the first European tour of Futurist exhibitions he bought *The City Rises* in London). In 1916 Boccioni was invited by the marchese and marchesa di Casanova to their villa in Pallanza on Lake Maggiore. It was here that he painted this portrait.

On July 15 Boccioni confided to his friend Vico Baer: "I've written an insistent letter to Busoni. He still owes me the whole sum for the portrait." There are references in other letters to this problem. After his stay in Pallanza Busoni went to Switzerland; on July 26 he wrote to Boccioni from Zurich: "For the moment I'm sending 2,000 Fr. toward the portrait to the Milan address."

This late work shows how the artist's interests were turning toward a formalism sustained chiefly by color; here he attacks the canvas with a chromatic violence that is expressed in thick impasto. The structuring of the image through a rhythmic geometrization and the blue and green palette show the strong influence of Cézanne. The same compositional and chromatic elements recur in the other works painted by Boccioni during his stay at Pallanza. He was soon after assigned to the field artillery, and these were the last works before his death.

EXHIBITIONS: Milan 1916–17, no. 76 (*Grande ritratto del Maestro Busoni*); Milan 1933; Winterthur 1959, no. 27; Milan 1982–83, no. 143

LITERATURE: Severini 1933, p. 358; Costantini 1934, p. 197; Carrà 1945, n.p. (ill.); Benet 1949, no. 53; Sironi and Zervos 1950, p. 15; Argan and Calvesi 1953, fig. 80, p. 29; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 402; De Grada 1962, pl. 24; Ballo 1964, no. 604, pp. 386–87; Martin 1968, no. 219; Bruno 1969, no. 198a; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 87; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 946; Roche-Pézard 1983, no. 99, ill. 52; Crispolti 1986, p. 21

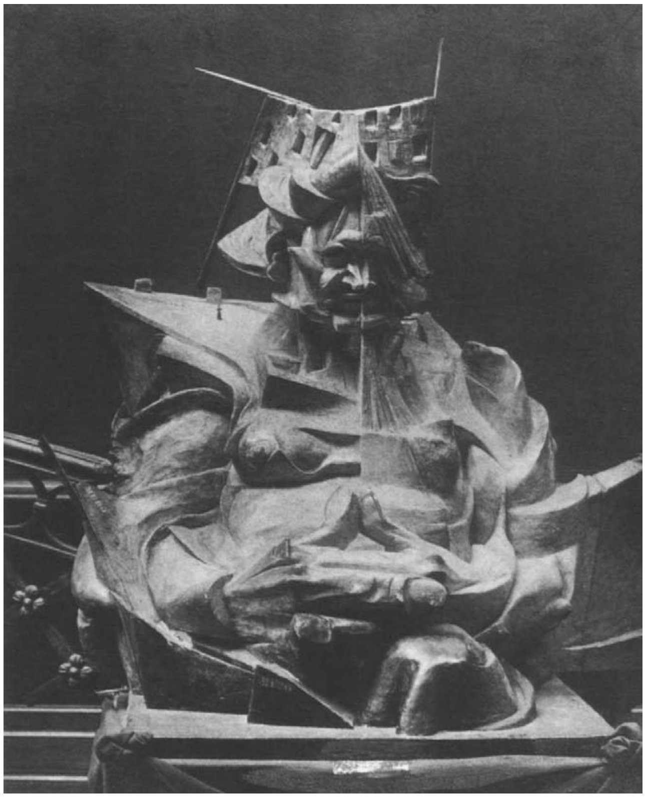


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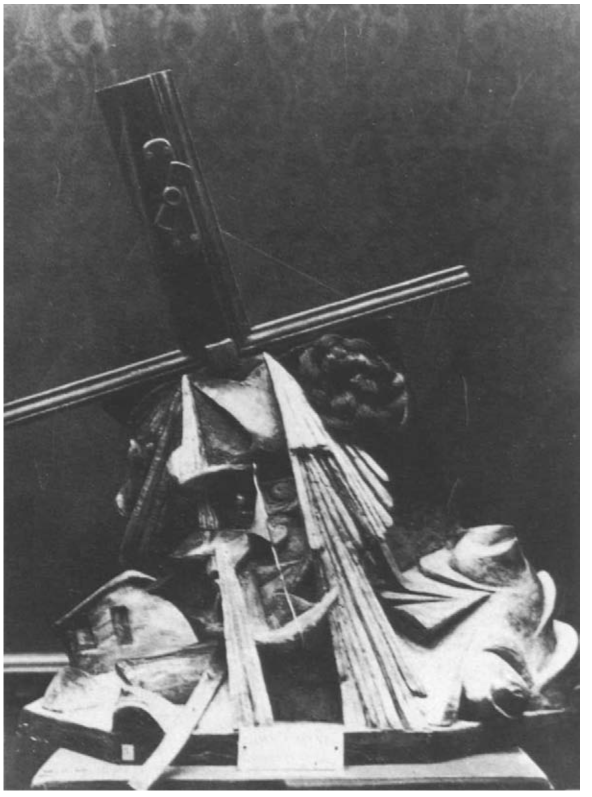
Umberto Boccioni and *Head + House + Light* (*Testa + Casa + Luce;* ▷ later destroyed), 1912. Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

SCULPTURE, ETCHINGS, AND CARTOONS

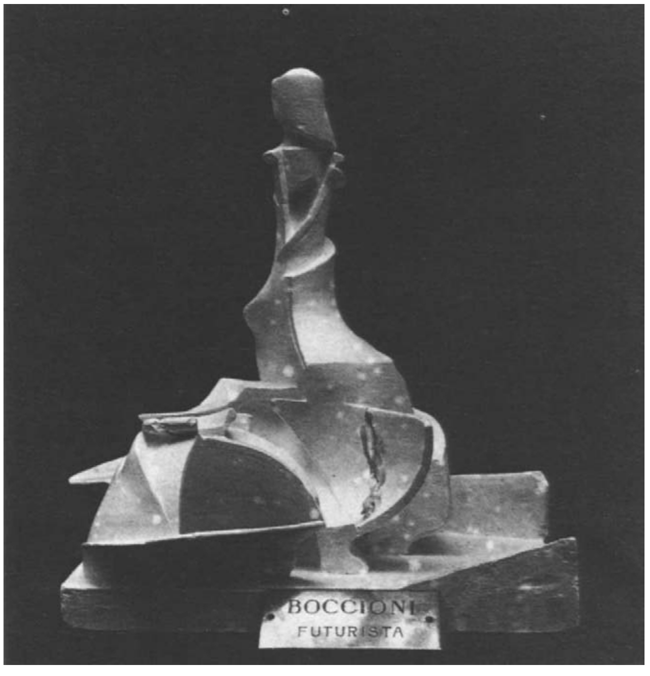




Umberto Boccioni, *Head + House + Light* (*Testa + casa + luce*), 1912 (later destroyed). Photo: Arte Fotografica, Rome. Courtesy Giuseppe Sprovieri



Umberto Boccioni, *Fusion of a Head and a Window (Fusione di una testa e di una finestra)*, ca. 1912 (later destroyed). Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini, Milan



Umberto Boccioni, *Force-Forms of a Bottle* (*Forme-forza di una bottiglia*), 1913 (later destroyed). Photo: Arte Fotografica, Rome. Courtesy Giuseppe Sprovieri



Umberto Boccioni, *Muscles in Movement* (*Muscoli in velocità*), 1913 (later destroyed). Photo: Arte Fotografica, Rome. Courtesy Giuseppe Sprovieri

Boccioni as Sculptor

The *Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture*, signed by Umberto Boccioni alone, was published on April 11, 1912. It is unlikely he had yet tried his hand at sculpture in any material way, making his discussion purely theoretical. In point of fact, on the date in question he was still in Berlin; on April 13 he wrote to his friend Barbantini: "I have been in Berlin for some days now and am about to finish my. . . international *tournée.*" Since February Boccioni had been traveling around Europe, from Paris to Berlin and London, then again to Berlin and Paris, to organize together with Marinetti the various stages of the traveling show of Futurist paintings. Nor can it be supposed that in the months preceding the Paris show he had found time to experiment with sculpture, since he was entirely taken up with preparing his canvases for the Futurist debut on the international scene.

On March 15, however, he wrote to his friend Vico Baer that he was "obsessed by sculpture" and had beheld "a complete renewal of that mummified art." He was then in Paris and in contact with artists who, particularly at that moment, were deeply involved in revivifying the traditional forms of sculpture, most notably Duchamp-Villon, Archipenko, and Picasso.

It was only some months after publishing his manifesto that Boccioni confided to Severini in a letter datable to November 1912: "I am hard at work but don't finish anything, it seems to me. That is, I hope that what I am doing signifies something because I don't understand what I am doing. It is strange and it is terrible, but I am calm. Today I worked six hours in a row on the sculpture and do not understand the result. . . . Planes upon planes, cross-sections of muscles, of a face, and what then? And the overall effect? Does what I am creating come to life? Where am I going to end up? Can I ask enthusiasm and comprehension from others when I ask myself just what is the emotion that arises out of what I am doing? It suffices that there will always be a revolver. . . and yet I am utterly calm."

And again a few days later: "What we have to do is enormous; the commitment required is terrible, and the plastic means appear and vanish in the very moment of realization. It is terrible. I don't know what to say, don't know what to do.

"I do not understand anything anymore. . . .

"And then I am struggling with sculpture: I work work work and don't know what I am producing.

"Is it interior? Exterior? Is it sensation? Is it delirium? Is it mere brain? Analysis? Synthesis? What the hell it is I simply do not know! Forms on forms . . . confusion. . . .

"The Cubists are wrong. . . . Picasso is wrong. The academics are wrong. . . . I no longer know what life I should be leading. . . . I tremble! At the same time calm myself. . . . If I should have to go on in this key I could only kill myself. Certainly life is becoming an unbearable torment to me."

On January 11, 1913, Boccioni opened his heart once more to Severini: "Do you continue to consider your sojourn in Paris definitive or are you uncertain? What are you working on? I buckled down to work in a feverish manner after the last visit to Paris. But I am not satisfied. We Italians have terrible difficulties. My book has been finished since December 1. . . . I have painted, sculpted, and written day and night. . . . Now I am recopying and retouching. I don't even have women anymore! Nothing! Live utterly chastely . . . for how long?"

Only after his exhibition at Galerie La Boëtie in Paris (June–July 1913) was opened did the artist regain a little of the confidence he seems to have lost during the months of grinding labor. It was in a rather different tone that he wrote Vico Baer: "Yesterday, inauguration. Very many people and just as much imbecility. Sheer quantity of work dumbfounds artists friends and enemies. Sculpture is very much less intellectual than painting. Rarely does one find someone who can speak about it with competence. In everyone there is sheer amazement at the quantity of work and audacity. Apollinaire, completely won over again, is still with me. He wants me to put various things into bronze as soon as I am back in Milan. He says there is no one but me in modern sculpture. He has said that some of my works are genuine historical documents that must be preserved.

"He has turned out a little article for *L'Intransigeant*, but today is going back to producing a serious study. He will give lectures in Italy.

"He likewise feels a strange amazement at the intensity the force the violence of this latest manifestation of mine . . . a true bayonet attack.

"Guillaume Apollinaire is completely won over to Futurism and soon we shall see the fruits. He has done a lecture tour in Germany, and the influence and celebrity of our painting, he says, is extraordinary. Yesterday evening we had dinner, he, I, and Marinetti, in a famous restaurant on the Rive Gauche. We talked from seven until three in the morning. We came out drunk and exhausted. After these discussions, which are true conquests by magnetism, I end up sad and discouraged. I think about what I would have done by now if I had grown up with Paris or Berlin as my environment. . . . I would certainly not find myself in the miserable conditions that Italy leaves me in if from time to time I did not make breakneck leaps that let me go forward! . . .

"Paris this time doesn't overwhelm me. I feel I have entered into it with a domain of my own and am treated as an equal.

"I am homesick for Milan, for my studio . . . but to what solitude must I return. Enough! Forward!

"All Cubism seems to be stuck where it is. The painting moves little and is certainly not on the track of a fundamental revolution in sensibility. Archipenko's sculpture has fallen into archaism and the barbaric. There is an error in aim. Our primitivism should be entirely without analogy to that of the ancients. Ours is the farthest point reached in a *complexity*; the ancient is the mere stammering of a *simplicity*."

These letters show the troubled, even anguished path that led Boccioni to sculpture.

The visit to Paris at the beginning of 1912 seems to have struck the first spark that would lead him to ponder the question of plastic form. This is further confirmed in Severini's autobiography, which tells of Boccioni's short visit to Paris in April 1912: "Before heading back to Milan, and after his visits to Berlin and Brussels where we had had our exhibitions, Boccioni spent a few more days in Paris, revealing during that time a very great interest in sculpture. Every day and at every moment there were discussions or conversations on that subject. To indulge him in his desire to delve deeper into the problem of sculpture I took him to see Archipenko, Agéro, Brancusi, and also Duchamp-Villon, who were at that point the boldest avant-garde sculptors. . . . After that good period, perhaps the last good period in our friendship, Boccioni went back to Milan and, after scarcely fifteen days, the *Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture* was issued, about five months after the exhibition of painting. In the course of our discussions and our visits to the Parisian sculptors Boccioni had never let slip an allusion to that manifesto, and so I was surprised and saddened because I understood that with these 'speed records,' this feverish quest after the new for its own sake, and this lack of frankness, our friendship would suffer much."

Thus the new manifesto must have been jotted down in the very first days after Boccioni's return to Milan. Even if written all at one sitting, as would appear from extant documents, the text contains a number of general reflections on art very much along the same lines as those in the preceding proclamations. The art of the past—in particular, Egyptian and Greek forms and Michelangelo's grandiosity—is condemned even more violently. Such expressions, Boccioni writes, are a "monstrous anachronism" with respect to the mercurial rhythms of modern times: "Sculpture has not progressed because of the very limited field allotted to it by the academic concept of the nude. An art that has to undress a man or woman to the buff in order even to begin to act on our feelings is a dead art! Painting, however, has been given a transfusion of fresh blood, has deepened and broadened itself by letting the landscape and surroundings act simultaneously on the human figure or on objects, arriving by those means at our Futurist *compenetration of planes* (*Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*, April 11, 1910). Sculpture likewise will find a new fountainhead of emotion, and therefore of style, but only when it extends its plasticity to what our barbarous primitiveness has made us consider, up to our day, as subdivided, impalpable, and consequently not expressible through three-dimensional means."

To renew itself sculpture must avail itself of new means, new materials: "That new plastic art will therefore involve translating the atmospheric planes that link and intersect things into plaster, bronze, glass, wood, and any other material one may wish. This vision, which I have called *physical transcendentalism* (lecture on Futurist painting at the Circolo Artistico in Rome, May 1911), is capable of rendering in three-dimensional forms the attractions and mysterious affinities that give form to the planes of the objects represented."

As he had previously stated about painting, Boccioni insisted that the renewal of sculpture must arise out of the intimate relationship between the figure and its environment. The whole notion of a closed form with value in itself must be removed from consideration, since the existence of any object is entirely bound up with the space in which it is found: "Sculpture must therefore make objects come to life by rendering their prolongation into space perceivable, systematic, and three-dimensional: No one can still doubt that one object leaves off where another begins and that there is nothing that surrounds our own

body—bottle, automobile, house, tree, street—that does not cut through it and slice it into cross-sections with an arabesque of curves and straight lines."

The sole sculptor of genius in the contemporary age, said Boccioni, is Medardo Rosso (1858–1928) because of his attempt to renew traditional form by modeling impressionistically in wax rather than by striving for solid forms; he thereby sought to "open a vaster field to sculpture by rendering in three-dimensional art the influence of an environment and the atmospheric links that bind it to the subject." Yet even Rosso's efforts have their limit because the figure is still conceived "as a world in itself."

If, by modeling the subject in wax so as to render it more sensitive to the play of light, Rosso shattered the concept of a piece of sculpture as a single isolated block, Boccioni would attempt a further step in that direction. He would seek to reproduce the architectonic feeling of masses by fragmenting the image—slashing it through with light rays wedged into the plastic surface—and thus make sculpture come alive within its environment. This environment must constitute a mass continuous with the subject. In this way a dynamic compenetration is created between the two elements. To Cubist analysis and the sectioning of materials and objects, Boccioni counterposed the synthesis of all the realities, of all real elements, in a single, absolute, total image. Thus also, not the mechanical repetition involved in passing from the state of rest to the state of motion but the recomposition of all the components, whether physical or mental, which interact in a gesture, would come into play. These theories he would attempt to apply to apparently lifeless objects as well, to a bottle sitting on a table for example, setting free the forces contained inside them. The bottle thus infiltrates the atmosphere in a spiral motion that prolongs the sensation of the object beyond its physical limits.

"A Futurist sculptural composition will contain within itself the kind of marvelous mathematical and geometric elements that make up the objects of our time. And these objects will not be disposed alongside the statue as explanatory attributes or separate decorative elements but, in accord with the laws of a new conception of harmony, will be embedded in the muscular lines of a human body. Thus the wheel of some piece of machinery might project from a mechanic's armpit; thus the line of a table could cut right through the head of a man reading, and the book with its fan of pages could slice the reader's stomach into cross-sections."

By such means the object itself is destroyed and liberated from its outward look: Sculptural representation will no longer seek to make it look "like" but, instead, recreate the "duration of the appearance." Thus Boccioni flatly rejected the concept of the statue as a rigid and static entity and of the monument as a rhetorical and commemorative grandiose expression. He condemned the work of three artists held up at the time as major sculptors: Constantin Meunier, Emile-Antoine Bourdelle, and Auguste Rodin—the first because his conception of sculpture is too closely tied to that of the Greeks; the second because he emulates "the stonecarvers of the Gothic cathedrals"; and the third because his grandiose heroism was already fully realized by Michelangelo.

The speed with which Boccioni composed his manifesto is typical—he was ready to explode into action at the first flicker of enthusiasm, as if a latent fever was always waiting to push his spiritual thermometer to its limit. Driven by an ever-present emotional tension he shaped ideas that themselves put him on the rack and, as it were, consumed even his

physical fiber. Certainly what Picasso, Archipenko, Duchamp-Villon, and Brancusi were exploring at the time forms the basis of these ideas. The approach of these artists to a plastic art remote from the pomposity and pseudo-grandeur of much of nineteenth-century sculpture would have ignited in Boccioni a desire to arrive at his own, different, sculptural expression. And so the sculptures he set about modeling would have few points of contact with the heads by Picasso that he had probably seen in the artist's studio or in Kahnweiler's gallery, or with the still-rigid formal constructions that Duchamp-Villon would soon abandon, or with Archipenko's schematic faceting of planes and analytical primitivism, or finally with the sublime archaic simplicity unique to Brancusi.

In his first experiments, working with an overabundance of elements and materials, Boccioni indulged in a baroque exuberance of image. But use of such a variety of materials (some unorthodox) to render the object transparent or to accentuate its impact with space was not in accord with the formal clarity of his theories. In *Fusion of a Head and a Window* the real elements—a glass eye, a slat from a stretcher, hair—merely weigh down the plastic ensemble in a bulkiness that obstructs an overall vision. In *Head + House + Light*—the painting *Matter* (no. 60) translated into sculptural materials—the gigantic figure of his mother is deformed by force-lines and is penetrated by the houses and the balustrade of iron and wood; yet despite all of Boccioni's efforts, however, the work does not communicate the dynamism he aimed at. The body, broken up by a thousand angularities, seems to repose on the enormous knotty hands without ever soaring on the impetus imparted by the projecting lines. In *Antigraceful* (no. 86), however, which most resembles Picasso's modeled heads, the head is caught up in the spiral that sweeps around it from the base upward and forms a homogeneous group with the house.

But it was only with the studies on dynamism that Boccioni would succeed in pruning all architectural excrescences from his figures. In *Synthesis of Human Dynamism*, the image seems to sweep everything encountered in its path into its whirling movement, and the tangle of muscles that look like strange mechanical elements seems to free itself from the static masses that weighed down the first sculptures. After the simplification of *Spiral Expansion of Muscles in Movement*, which marked a further step toward a dynamic synthesis, Boccioni arrived at *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (no. 88), the highest achievement of his entire sculptural effort. Here the body prolongs itself in a trajectory of motion that is astutely simplified and takes possession of the space around it: a harpoon launched into the circumambient air. Finally he had succeeded in representing in a single and therefore absolute form all the possible variations of a movement, and what he achieved is an utterly successful synthesis of the struggle between object and ambience.

Of the eleven plastic ensembles exhibited in Paris during the summer of 1913, only three examples survive: *Antigraceful, Development of a Bottle in Space* (no. 87), and *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. The other works were destroyed after the posthumous exhibition in Milan during the winter of 1916. According to some sources they had been shown in the open air and after the exhibition closed were smashed by a violent storm. On the other hand, the artist's sister said they had been entrusted to the sculptor Brocchi, a friend of Boccioni's, who out of jealousy and willful negligence let them be destroyed in the process of moving. It matters little now how these works were lost. We can only mourn their disappearance and be grateful for the photographs that have survived.

Boccioni as Engraver

On April 28, 1907, during his period of work and study in Venice, Boccioni conscientiously entered in his diary the materials and preparations for etching he had learned from one Signor Zezzof. That spring he became involved for the first time in the engraving technique, and this new interest coincided with a sudden attraction to the graphic works of Rembrandt and Dürer. While he would take these as models, he was firmly set on studying for himself the variations in chiaroscuro, the contrasts between zones of light and shadow, and the harsh effects of those odd angles of perspective or lighting particularly suited to the engraver's means. Numerous drawings done between 1907 and 1910, for the most part using pen, remind one of the swift metalpoint tracing of an etching in their quest after minute tonal variations in blacks and grays. Not unexpectedly, the first engravings done while he was still in Venice do not yet communicate the emotional force so conspicuous in those from 1908–1909, which are charged with an intense pictorial sensibility. With increasing mastery of the technique he developed a more characteristically decisive graphic style, and his modeling took on surprising chromatic effects.

Boccioni's subjects for the most part were little genre scenes drawn from his own everyday life, precisely laid-out landscapes, or portraits of an intimate, familiar character. Especially in the later though still pre-Futurist engravings, light grazes the forms to bring out the details of the scene. The early efforts are still mostly descriptive in character; in the later ones the contrast between blacks and whites becomes dramatic and ever more artfully contrived.

Working the plate with a very sharp point made possible a diagonal rhythmic repetition soon to be put into effect in the drawings done as dynamic studies for the series of paintings entitled *States of Mind* (no. 56). In the engravings of this time there is a romantic feeling for the material and above all for gestures which, in their violence, add further impact to the highlights. The élan that is so much a part of the artist's character reveals itself with a fullness of spirit and an impetuosity that make little effort to mask his unbridled enthusiasm.

It is not easy to establish connections between Boccioni's engravings and those of artists who preceded him. In an excellent article of 1933 on the artist's engravings, De Witt suggests influences from Fattori and Faruffini, meanwhile admitting that such comparisons are risky in view of Boccioni's "forthright independence."

Some thirty examples are known of various subjects in drypoint or etching (nos. 89–97). In the earliest phase, that of 1907, drypoint seems to have been more congenial to the artist, particularly for its velvety line. In incising directly into the copperplate with a drypoint needle, fine burrs, or ridges, are thrown up by the tool as it cuts each groove, and in printing the ink is held by these tiny burrs, creating painterly effects. Boccioni later preferred the etching technique—in fact, as early as 1907 there is an occasional isolated etching or a work combining this technique with drypoint.

According to Bellini (1972), Boccioni did not modify his plates. Variations occasionally noticeable are due entirely to the marked oxidation of a few plates, not to the artist's hand. Black ink was used most often, though a few examples were printed in sepia, sanguine, or green.

Only a single lithograph—after a drawing of 1913, *Dynamism of a Cyclist*—is known. It was executed in 1922 by the Bauhaus as part of a portfolio of prints by various contemporary artists.

Boccioni as Commercial Artist

The aspiring artist's contact with the world of commercial art came very early. Severini and other sources indicate that the youth, arriving in Rome at the turn of the century, took drawing lessons from a painter named Mataloni who specialized in publicity posters. By 1904 the creation of such works constituted the young man's sole source of income. True to his personality Boccioni sought something more in his assigned subjects than his employers may have looked for, studying all the possibilities wherever they were to be found. He was a frequent visitor to the racetracks, where he made quick sketches of the jockeys. In Piazza di Spagna he drew the peasant women visiting for the day from the little country towns south of Rome, who wore the brilliantly colorful garments of the Roman Campagna and, to the beat of the tambourine, enlivened with their dancing the already somewhat overly self-conscious streets of the capital of a new nation and an ancient religion. A number of tempera drawings of this subject survive; one, dated May 13, 1904, helps to reconstruct the chronology of other stylistically related groups of temperas.

In a letter to his mother and sister written from Paris on April 17, 1906, the youthful explorer of a vast and still unknown world wrote about how, in taking off for France, he felt freed from a great weight; the heaviest part of his burden was his work as a poster painter, which he despised to his core but had to rely on as his means of support: "For two years now I no longer study because of those cursed posters. They have ruined my nerves. I cannot stand anyone anymore, love nothing anymore, see myself well and truly ruined. I have never written you this because it was no use to do so, but I say it now that it's all over and now that for the last week I have been studying as in the past when I was pure. I have been contaminated by that revolting trade and will never do more of it. In another letter I'll talk to you about the whole business. The mere thought of it puts me into such a rage as to beat my head against a wall. I have lost two years without realizing it, I have let myself be outdistanced shamefully, and who knows if I will pick myself up again. *E basta*!"

For all his aversion to an activity that crushed him with its daily compromise, a few years later, around 1908, he had to resign himself to taking it up again in order to survive. Though he resented the time taken away from more serious work, with our hindsight we cannot deny the important role a working familiarity with commercial imagery had in the young artist's stylistic and compositional development. Years of having to "think big" in designing advertisements deepened his capacity to organize the space of a composition and encouraged him to seek out ever more daring perspective angles. Moreover, the limitations imposed by the two-dimensionality of the poster format forced him to concentrate his motifs to the full so that they could stand out against the background and not demonstrate mere virtuoso decorativism. This work would prove a stern exercise and training, invaluable for his "true" trade as painter.

The eight illustrations for the Automobile Club (nos. 98 and 99), presumably completed around 1904, are of considerable interest. They contain a series of motifs Boccioni would develop later and are extraordinary evidence of how early his imagination was caught by what, in mature years, he would think of as "dynamism." As one would expect from such a sponsor, the subject imposed was very much *le dernier cri* at the moment: the automobile. In six of the eight temperas the machine is represented in movement: whirlpools of arrowed signs that sweep around the wheels to give the impression the tires are revolving rapidly. The compositional device by which the machine is always drawn in perspective further brings out the sensation of movement he aimed at. Horses and dogs involved in a fox hunt dart from one side of the image to the other in a mad course. A few broad and well-defined lines do all the work, and there is no hint of insistence on details. With the most summary indications the image not only reads clearly but also has an immediate visual impact. The well-defined outlines of figures and objects seem to leap out from a uniform background.

Boccioni would return to the theme of the automobile in a drawing for the cover of the weekly *Avanti della Domenica* (Rome, November 12, 1905). There, a detail of the vehicle in movement is isolated, and the diagonal composition is exploited to convey the impression of motion even more effectively and intensely.

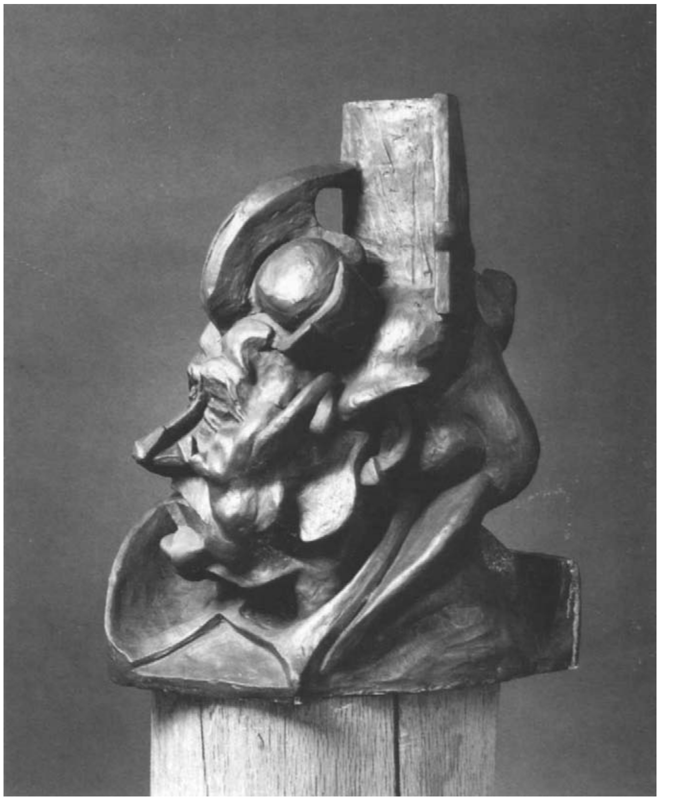
86. *Antigraceful*
Antigrazioso 1913

Bronze
24 × 20½ × 16 in. (61 × 52.1 × 40.6 cm.)
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

The present work was cast in bronze by the lost-wax process in 1950–51 from the plaster original, which then belonged to the Marinetti family. The work was commissioned from the Perego foundry by Gino Ghiringhelli of the Galleria Il Milione in Milan on the occasion of an exhibition of Italian art in Paris. In November 1956 this cast was sold by Benedetta Marinetti to Harry and Lydia Winston (now Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York), along with the two other bronzes, *Development of a Bottle in Space* (no. 87) and *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (no. 88).

The plaster model, exhibited in Paris in the summer of 1913 along with other sculptures, was sold on that occasion or shortly thereafter. Indeed, Boccioni in a letter to his friend Giuseppe Sprovieri—the young gallery owner and promoter of numerous Futurist projects, including the sculpture show in his gallery on Via del Tritone in Rome—stated that the work had been sold. In all probability the letter dates to late 1913, shortly before the opening of the sculpture exhibition on December 6. On the occasion of this Rome show the critic for *Il Tirso* remarked: "The originality and works of this man, who in a single year has passed from the quasi-Impressionist experiments of *Antigraceful* to the straightforward Futurism of *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, are truly admirable! *Antigraceful* already offers some experiments in thickness and a few timid interpenetrations of planes."

Exhibited again in Florence in 1914, as the property of Cavaliere Alberto Porta of Milan, the sculpture was analyzed by Longhi (1914): "A few words on *Antigraceful* will suffice. Imagine a Post-Impressionism that, by leaving much to the action of chiaroscuro, tends to consolidate some flowing, instantaneous image—perhaps Rosso's old concierge—by gathering the disturbed plastic material in a stream of bulbous masses accompanied by some disorder; it is not an actual stylistic organization but is in any case a tendency toward style; the compressed lumps of flesh weigh in a few hollows constructed by the bony framework that here and there protrudes in hooks suggesting a submerged but secure structure. Again, the weightiness of the sagging material—this plastic obsession that dominates modern art—is vitally expressed where a number of bulbous forms hang on a single filament, hidden like a dozen soft figs attached to a single stem. Some elements remain outside, alluded to but not integrated into the environmental background, from which two superfluous papery segments radiate. But it is necessary to dwell on these elements somewhat when they tend to stand out and almost to impose themselves. . . . *Antigraceful*: an articulated, almost submerged but sure structure, since in its hollow intervals it clots in hardened bulbous masses—a hardening also in the organic sense—the convoluted mire of



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Impressionism. Outside: vague memories of a static setting."

Argan (1953) noted that while the sculpture maintains a realistic composition, it nevertheless "reflects the persuasion that every plane or outline belongs to the space no less than to the object and are together anatomy and perspective, anatomy and light, anatomy and corporeal reflection of other invisible and present objects."

According to Taylor (1961): "Combining the heavy sculptural mass with freely moving surface planes, Boccioni has created a lively image that seems to burst with inner life. It startlingly merges geometric forms with soft fleshy shapes yet is unified by the unflagging vitality of its surface. Many of Boccioni's cherished ideas find voice: The forms of faraway houses merge with the form of the head; the face has an extraordinary range of expressions; it smiles, frowns, or is pensive according to the view and the viewer; and bold rhythms seem to envelope the physical form. Yet bold and expressive as the head may be—and it certainly shows at once Boccioni's impressive talent for sculpture—it is just one long step removed from the freely modeled heads of Rosso, relating to them rather the way the final version of the *States of Mind* related to the original studies."

Martin (1968) remarked that "the vitality of the artist's mother appears to conquer the solidity and inertness of the material and—as in *Materia* [*Matter*, no.60]—forces it to bear the changing imprints of her states of mind. The subtlety with which these rapid shifts of mood and position are shown—by means of variations and contrasts of precise and soft modelling, deep and shallow openings, etc. —points to an astounding technical fluidity and proves Boccioni's extraordinary sculptural talent."

Golding (1972) compared Boccioni's sculpture with Picasso's *Head*, a bronze executed in the fall of 1909: "Picasso's *Head* appears to have been known to Boccioni, at least in reproduction, and... *Antigrazioso*, probably of the fall of 1912, gives the impression of being simply a more agitated, baroque reworking of the Cubist original."

In *Antigraceful* Boccioni tried to assert a poetic that denies to art that aspect of captivating agreeableness that had been essential for so many centuries. Here he accentuated the disagreeable aspect by distorting the face and cutting it with planes. Picasso's example had a particular importance in this phase of Boccioni's production; the Italian artist seems to have perfected the lessons of Picasso, even if this work still looks unripe and stamped by a deliberately grotesque realism. In the transition from painting to sculpture Boccioni lost that synthetic abstraction he had achieved in the paintings of 1912; in *Horizontal Volumes* (no. 59) the color together with the lines creates a compenetration of figure and space that is lacking in *Antigraceful*, even if it appears to be an almost literal translation of the painting. In the sculpture the relation between medium and image is too dramatized—the form does not succeed in freeing itself from material thickness and heaviness.

The plaster original, which has been in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna di Roma since 1952, has lost the force-lines that were once inserted in the head.

EXHIBITIONS: Detroit 1957–58, no. 20, p. 38, ill. p. 42; Milan 1960b, no. 41, p. 194, ill. p. 51; Paris, 1960–61, no. 36, p. 24; New York 1961, no. 48, pp. 87, 92, 143, ill. p. 91; Detroit 1972–73; Washington, D.C., 1978, no. 50; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 44; New York 1973–74, no. 28; New York 1974–75

LITERATURE: Curjel 1951, ill. p. 13; Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 42; Giedion-Welcker 1960, ill. p. 85; Degand and Arp 1957, ill. p. 30; Saarinen 1957, fig. 5, p. 65, ill. p. 34; Arts 1958, ill. p. 36; Francastel 1959, ill. p. 7; Seuphor 1960, p. 358, ill. p. 40; Pearlstein 1961, ill. p. 30; De Grada 1962, pls. 74, 75, pp. 101, 140, 146, 175, 177, 343; Winston 1962, ill. p. 6; Barr 1963, p. 63, ill. p. 62; Taylor 1963, p. 303; Ballo 1964, no. 477, p. 500; Bowness 1965, ill. p. 125; Francoeur 1967, ill. on cover; Licht 1967, p. 332, pl. 220; Arnason 1968, fig. 374, ill. p. 215; Martin 1968, pp. 164, 167, pl. 151; Bruno 1969, p. 108; Marrits 1970, ill. p. 344; Golding 1972, p. 16, ill. p. 17; Rye 1972, ill. p. 82; Cachin 1974, p. 39; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, ill. no. 67, p. 73; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 774, p. 431



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87. *Development of a Bottle in Space*
Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio 1913

Bronze
15 × 24 × 13 in. (38.1 × 61 × 33 cm.)
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

The original plaster model of this work belonged to the Marinetti family until 1952, when it was acquired by Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho for the museum of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. One of the first two castings, executed in 1931 by Luigi Ciampaglia on behalf of the Galleria Chiurazzi, is in dark polished bronze and is now in the Galleria Civica in Milan; the other, in white metal, was acquired in 1947 by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 1949 the brothers Giovanni and Angelo Nicci cast two rough bronzes with a light brown patina, one of which was acquired by the Kunsthaus, Zurich, while the other, belonging to the Marinetti family, was sold in 1956 to Harry and Lydia Winston (now Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York).

Two versions of the plaster model existed, although from a comparison of contem-



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poraneous photographs, they do not seem to display differences in structure. Nevertheless, the titles—*Development of a Bottle in Space Through Form* and *Development of a Bottle in Space Through Color*—indicate the two works differ from each other in that the latter was colored a bright red. According to an oral communication from Zeno Birolli, this second plaster model was destroyed along with other sculptures in 1917, but a young artist collected the fragments and reconstructed it.

In a list he drew up for Sprovieri, on the occasion of the show held in Rome in the winter of 1913–14, Boccioni set the price of the sculpture—in its two versions—at 600 lire for the first and 400 lire for the second. The critics reacted favorably to this work, and a reviewer of the time described it as a "pure architectonic study, extremely graceful in its simplicity."

Argan (1953) considered the sculpture "an analytical experiment on the relation between an internal space and an external one . . . the planes . . . are . . . no longer boundaries to the object but [act] as communication and connection between these two spaces, as a means to restore the unity of the space beyond the empirical limits of things."

Taylor (1961) stressed the dynamic aspect: "Looked at as a source of motion the bottle becomes a complex dynamic form. Its roundness expands with a centrifugal momentum, engulfing the forms around it, while the highlights and shadows create counter rhythms that produce conflicting internal shapes. Observed from any angle the sculpture conveys a sense of motion: Both light and motion are translated into positive sculptural forms."

Golding (1972) remarked: "Working with a humble, matter-of-fact subject, Boccioni seems to have experienced a sense of liberation and his *Bottle* is, except for the *Unique Forms*, his most perfectly realized sculpture and a minor masterpiece. The inner cylinder of the bottle has been laid bare and seems to unfold and spiral quite naturally and inevitably into the space around it, while the tilted architecture of the tabletop and the basin-like form of the bottle's first lateral expansion act as a support for the rest of the object's vertical ascent. More than in any other of Boccioni's works in three dimensions the dynamic, spiralling forms which came most naturally to his hand are played off against the straight lines which he had originally felt would constitute the modernity of his sculpture, to achieve a perfect harmony. In a second, lost version of the subject, the straight line is sacrificed to violent, unbalanced corkscrew effects which result in a feeling of instability and disintegration."

Indeed, Boccioni executed another sculpture with the same subject, which was lost in all probability in 1917. From the greater torsion and spiraling vitality one can deduce that the work *Forme-forze di una bottiglia* (*Force-Forms of a Bottle*) was modeled after *Development of a Bottle in Space* and was still bound by solid compositional patterns. The broad supporting base and the fractured stepped rise toward the body of the object that is suddenly released in the air like a spring infuse the sculpture with a monumental feeling that the artist strove to eliminate in works that came shortly thereafter. The present work is, however, an advanced experiment on the relations between object and surroundings, which Boccioni set out to explore in 1911. It should be compared with *Table + Bottle + Houses* (no. 63), a pencil drawing that bears notations of measurements.

EXHIBITIONS: Detroit 1957–58, no. 21, p. 38, ill. p. 44; Los Angeles 1970–71, no. 9, pp. 232, 275, pl. 294, p. 295; Detroit 1972–73; New York 1974–75, no. 29; Washington, D.C. 1978, no. 51; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 45

LITERATURE: Argan and Calvesi 1953, pl. 55; Saarinen 1957, p. 65, ill. p. 64; Mellquist 1958, ill., n.p.; Canaday 1959, no. 632, pp. 473, 500, ill. p. 501; Seuphor 1960, p. 358, ill. p. 358; Taylor 1963, p. 295; Bowness 1965, ill. p. 126; Barilli 1968, pl. 28, pp. 46–47; Kramer 1971, ill. p. 54; Krauss 1977, ill. no. 36, pp. 42–43; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 782, pp. 436–37

88. *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*
Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio 1913

Bronze
47⅛ × 34 × 32⅜ in. (119.7 × 86.4 × 82.2 cm.)
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

This work is considered the most successful of Boccioni's sculptural experiments. The plaster original, which belonged to the Marinetti family, was acquired in 1952 by Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho for the museum of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. The castings in bronze are posthumous and were ordered by Marinetti; it is very likely that Boccioni himself, encouraged by the poet Apollinaire (as the artist stated in a letter to his friend Vico Baer), had expressed the wish that the plaster original be cast in bronze. The first casting was executed in 1931 on behalf of the Galleria Chiurazzi by the master craftsman Luigi Ciampaglia, who years before had made the large castings of the quadrigae on the memorial to Victor Emmanuel II in Piazza Venezia, Rome. On this occasion two specimens were done: the first in dark polished bronze (Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan) and the second in highly polished, copper-plated brass (Museum of Modern Art, New York). A second casting, ordered by the Marinetti family, was done in 1949 by Giovanni and Angelo Nicci. So as to be more faithful to the original, these two examples were left "crudely" cast and varnished a light brown color. Furthermore, in order to respect the complex structure of the original plaster, the architectonic base was also included. One of these two casts (the present work) was acquired in 1956 by Harry and Lydia Winston (now Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York). Other examples of this important sculpture, cast in the 1960s directly from one of the bronzes, do not have the thrust and stylistic elegance of the original.

Boccioni considered this sculpture the most successful of his works in this genre. On September 4, 1913, he wrote to Giuseppe Sprovieri, director of the Galleria Futurista in Rome, where the first Italian exhibition of the artist's sculpture would be held in December 1913: "I want . . . to recall from Paris, where it is presently at the Arte Sagot storeroom, my statue . . . called *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. It is my most recent work and it is the most liberated. It certainly should be included. If we do this exhibition I'll also send you the thirty drawings exhibited in Paris concerning sculptural dynamics."

In 1914 Roberto Longhi, then a young art historian, wrote a monograph on Boccioni's sculpture. He dwelled at length on the structural and architectonic qualities of the present work: "Never has a higher and more imperative intimation of the purely plastic vision been achieved. Synthesis of articulation—established in the spiral expansion—fleshly synthesis—in the muscles in velocity—join here in a single, perfectly constructed body. The coldly enumerated qualities—almost Assyrian—in the analysis of human dynamism interweave inexpressibly among themselves. Material neither too burnished nor too flowing, outline leaping and fatigued at the same time: organism and setting: pure architecture."

Argan (1953) stated: "*Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* is simply a further acceleration, an even swifter motion; and if the faster rhythm consumes what has remained of the object, it carefully spares the attitude. The 'superfluous' . . . is destroyed by velocity, but the velocity remains dislocation in space and does not constitute itself as body. It arrives at aerodynamic form, determined by a passage through space . . . the image of motion becomes concrete in an immobile, contemplated form. In the end the formal theme is still a moment of equilibrium, and thus of stasis,



the equilibrium or identity reached, as a result of movement, between the dispersal of the body in space and the condensation of space in the body."

Taylor (1961) commented: "The figure in *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* strides forth, a symbol of vitality and strength, yet its impetuous step rests lightly on the ground as if the opposing air gave the figure wings. It is muscular without muscles, and massive without weight. The rhythms of its forms triumph over the limitations of the human stride to suggest unending movement into infinite space. Of all Futurist works this best illustrates Boccioni's often repeated term 'physical transcendentalism.' The physical seems to lift itself by its own strength into the realm of the spirit. The long study of motion that preceded this work is justified not because it teaches us about perception or movement, but because it has produced an exhilarating symbol that in some mysterious way allows us to transcend for a moment those very physical qualities to which it draws our attention. Its forward thrust and assured pace express a buoyant optimism towards the modern world."

Martin (1968) remarked: "The strong torso welcomes and is constructed for strong air pressure; its powerful but open chest has a firm breastbone like that of a bird, which projects forwards and upwards as though to protect the head with a knob suggesting the hilt of a sword, or the mask of a fencer or motorcyclist. In this and other alterations of the human body to portray its adaptation to speed, there is a striking reminder of Marinetti's prediction of the 'non-human model' of the future, based on Lamarck's evolutionary hypothesis. This new, 'mechanical' being would be 'built to withstand an omnipresent speed. . . . He will be endowed with unexpected organs adapted to the exigencies of continuous shocks. [There will be] a prow-like development of the projection of the breastbone which will increase in size as the future man becomes a better flyer.'"

Although he saw a close connection between the work of Boccioni and that of Alexander Archipenko, Golding (1972) recognized a firm autonomy in the Italian artist: "It is perhaps fairest to see Boccioni's evolution, at least in the final 1913 phase, in terms of a more purely internal development which involved a recognition, however grudging, of an indigenous Italian and ultimately classicising tradition, which he had originally rejected out of hand. The most marked stylistic change in his own work has been seen from a sculpture which attempted to use only the straight line, through to a work which exults in the spiral. . . . The final armless image with its muscular contortions reminiscent of fluttering wet drapery owes more than a little to the originally despised forms of antiquity. The Victory of Samothrace and the speeding automobile have in a sense become one."

There can be no doubt that there is an affinity between Boccioni's sculpture and the Nike of Samothrace. The sudden movement of the torso, which rises as though checked by a strong wind that it must overcome, seems inspired by the elegant fluidity of the ancient statue. The forms that emerge from the body recall the soft draperies of the Nike and the sudden spread of the large wings.

EXHIBITIONS: Detroit 1957–58, no. 18, p. 38, ill. front and back cover; Detroit 1969, no. 27; Detroit 1972–73; New York 1973–74, no. 30; New York 1974–75; Washington 1978, no. 52; Philadelphia 1980–81, no. 48; Washington 1981, no. 356

LITERATURE: Degand and Arp 1957, ill. p. 30; Winston 1958, ill. p. 11; Seuphor 1960, p. 358, ill. p. 43; Carrieri 1961b, p. 66; Kuh 1962, ill.; Winston 1962, ill. p. 5; Taylor 1963, pp. 302, 303, ill.; Bowness 1965, ill. p. 72; Kuh 1965, no. 30, p. 135, ill. p. 51; Baro 1967, ill. p. 72; Taylor 1968, p. 85; Rye 1972, ill. p. 89; Tisdall and Bozzolla 1977, no. 82, p. 83; D'Harnoncourt 1980, p. 111; Kramer 1980, p. 41; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 856, pp. 466–70

Etchings

89. *Man Lying in a Field*
Uomo sdraiato su un prato 1907

Etching and drypoint
$5\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ in. (14.9×23.5 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

90. *The Artist's Mother Crocheting*
La madre con l'uncinetto 1907

Etching and drypoint
$14\frac{5}{8} \times 12\frac{1}{8}$ in. (37.1×30.8 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni; dated bottom center (in reverse): 1907
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

91. *Seated Woman Holding a Fan*
Signora con ventaglio 1907

Drypoint
$9\frac{3}{8} \times 6$ in. (23.8×15.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

92. *Piazza del Duomo* 1908

Etching
$4\frac{3}{4} \times 3$ in. (12.1×7.6 cm.)
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence

93. *Landscape with Industrial Plants*
Periferia 1908

Drypoint
$3\frac{5}{8} \times 6$ in. (9.2×15.2 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Umberto Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

94. *Sheet of Studies with Five Portraits*
Schizzi di teste 1909

Drypoint
7¼ × 11⅜ in. (18.4 × 28.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Umberto Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

95. *Male Cadaver: "The Drowned Man"*
L'annegato 1909

Etching
3⅞ × 5⅞ in. (9.8 × 14.9 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

96. *The Artist's Mother at a Table*
La madre davanti al tavolo con forbici 1910

Etching
5⅜ × 4⅝ in. (13.7 × 11.7 cm.)
Signed and dated bottom right: Boccioni gennaio 1910
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

97. *The Artist's Mother Sewing*
La madre che cuce 1910

Etching
5½ × 4½ in. (14 × 11.4 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Collection Lydia Winston Malbin, New York

LITERATURE: no. 89—De Witt 1933, p. 124; Perocco 1958; Taylor 1961b, no. 301; Archivi del Futurismo, 1962, no. 416; De Grada 1962, no. 4 (*Uomo sdraiato sul prato [Il solitario]*); Ballo 1964, no. 41, pp. 111–12; Bellini 1972, no. 9; Calvesi 1973, no. 5; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 270

No. 90—DeWitt 1933, p. 119; Argan and Calvesi 1953, p. 30; Taylor 1961b, no. 299; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 424; Ballo 1964, no. 64, p. 112; Bruno 1969, no. 31b; Bellini 1972, no. 14; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 275

No. 91—DeWitt 1933, p. 121; Taylor 1961b, no. 309 (1909–1910); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 422; Ballo 1964, no. 40, p. 111; Bellini 1972, no. 8; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 285

No. 92—Ballo 1964, no. 117, p. 112; Bellini 1972, no. 18; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 390

No. 93—Taylor 1961b, no. 307 (1909–1910); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 122, p. 112; Bellini 1972, no. 20; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 391

No. 94—Taylor 1961, no. 304; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 419; Ballo 1964, no. 37, p. 111; Bellini 1972, no. 5; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 400

No. 95—Taylor 1961, no. 308 (1909–1910); Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 427; Ballo 1964, no. 61, p. 111 (1907); Bruno 1969, no. 35b; Bellini 1972, no. 13 (1907); Calvesi 1973, no. 7 (1908–1909); Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 452

No. 96—De Witt 1933, p. 122; Taylor 1961b, no. 313; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 423; Ballo 1964, no. 282; Bruno 1969, no. 110; Bellini 1972, no. 29; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 460

No. 97—Taylor 1961b, no. 316; Archivi del Futurismo 1962, no. 411; Bellini 1972, no. 28; Calvesi 1973, no. 17; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 620



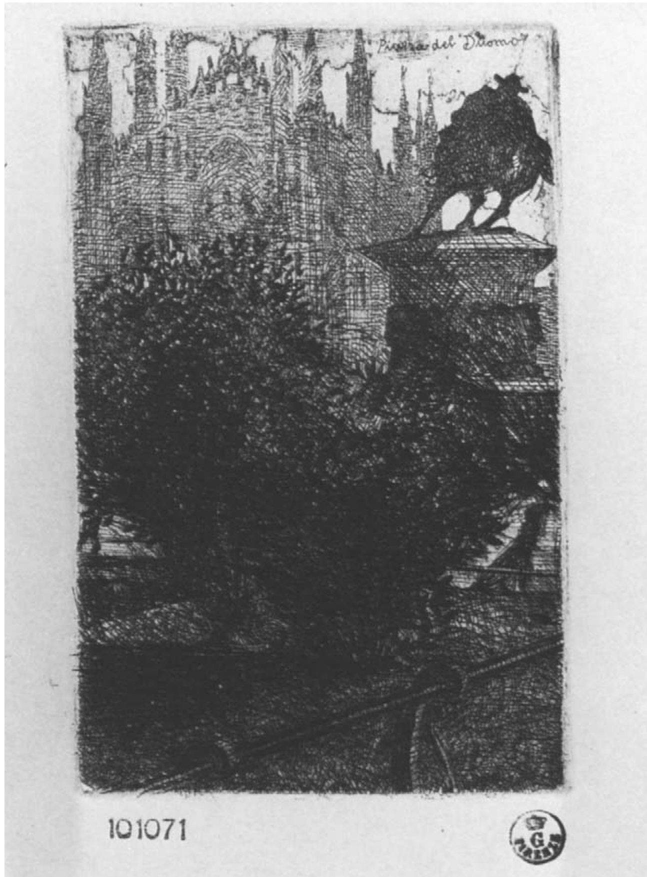
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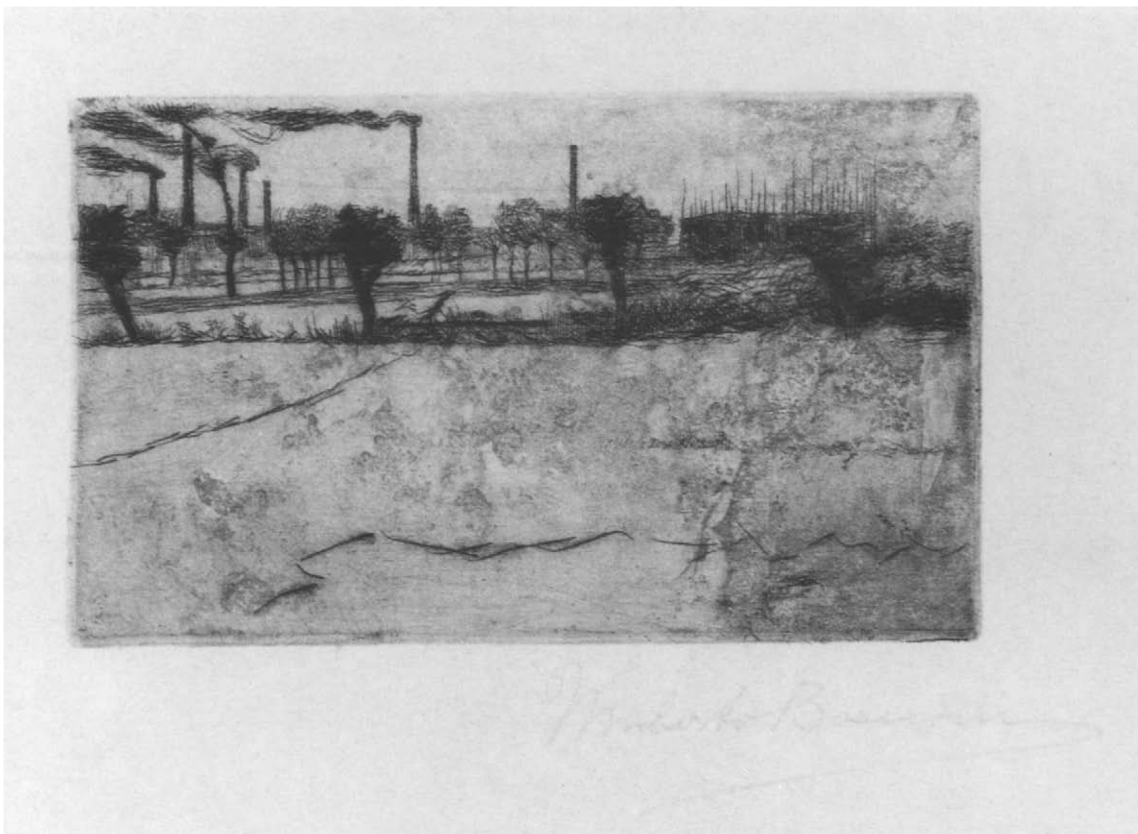
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91



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93



94



95



96



97

Cartoons

98. *Car in Motion*
Auto in corsa 1904

Tempera on cardboard
28 × 49¼ in. (71 × 125 cm.)
Signed bottom right: U. Boccioni
Automobile Club d'Italia, Rome

99. *Car and Fox Hunt*
Automobile e caccia alla volpe 1904

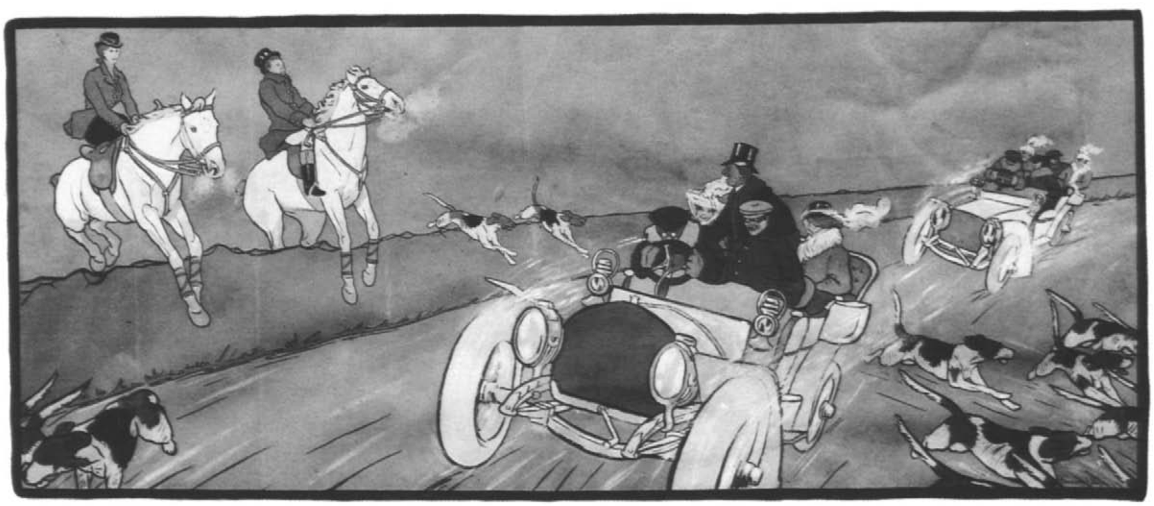
Tempera on cardboard
22⅝ × 48 in. (57.5 × 122 cm.)
Signed bottom right: Boccioni U.
Automobile Club d'Italia, Rome

LITERATURE: No. 98—Ballo 1964, no. 1, p. 61; Calvesi 1970, p. 185; Fagiolo 1971, pp. 50–52; Damigella 1972, p. XLVIII, no. 414; Calvesi 1973, no. 2; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 140

No. 99—Fagiolo 1971, pp. 50–52; Damigella 1972, pp. LXVIII–LXIX, no. 418; Calvesi and Coen 1983, no. 146



98



99

Detail of no. 75A ▷

WRITINGS



Writings

MANIFESTO OF THE FUTURIST PAINTERS

February 11, 1910

To the young artists of Italy!

The cry of rebellion we launch here, in which we firmly implant our ideals alongside those of the Futurist poets, does not come from a little aesthetic-minded clique but, on the contrary, expresses the violent desire that seethes in the veins of every creative artist today.

We want to fight to the bitter end against the fanatical, thoughtless, and purely snobbish religious faith in the past stoked by the nefarious existence of the museums. We are rebelling against the sluggishly supine admiration for old canvases, old statues, old objects, and against the enthusiasm for everything worm-eaten, rotting with filth, eaten away by time. And we judge unjust—criminal in fact—the habitual disdain for everything young, new, throbbing with life.

Comrades! We declare to you that triumphant progress in the sciences has brought about, in humanity as a whole, changes so profound as to dredge out an abyss between the past and us free creatures who are securely confident in the radiant magnificence of the future.

We are nauseated by the despicable sloth that, ever since the sixteenth century, has let our artists survive only through an incessant reworking of the glories of the past.

For the people of other nations Italy is still a land of the dead, an immense Pompeii still whitening with sepulchers. But Italy is being reborn, and in the wake of her political resurgence an intellectual resurgence is taking place. In the land of the illiterates schools are opening; in the land of *dolce far niente* innumerable factories are now roaring full tilt; in the land of traditional aesthetics one is struck today by a new élan, by lightning-bright inspirations of something utterly new.

Only that art is vital which finds its own elements in the world around it. Just as our forebears drew material for their art from the religious atmosphere weighing heavily on their souls and spirits, we must now draw our inspiration from the tangible miracles of contemporary life, from the iron network of speed that enwraps the world, from the ocean liners, the dreadnoughts, the marvelous flights furrowing the skies, from the depth-dark feats of the underwater navigators, from the convulsive struggle for the conquest of the unknown. Then too how can we remain indifferent to the frenetic activity of the great capitals, to the utterly new psychology of a life that takes wing only after dark, to the febrile figures of the viveur, the cocotte, the apache, the addicts to drink?

Because we propose to play our part in the badly needed renewal of all expressions of art, we resolutely declare war against all those artists and against all those institutions that, however they may camouflage themselves in raiment of pseudo-modernity, remain mired in tradition, in academicism, in a repugnant mental laziness.

We call on all young people to unleash their scorn on the whole lot of brainless canaille who in Rome applaud a sick-making reflorescence of spineless classicism; who in Florence praise to the skies the neurotic cultists of a hermaphroditic archaism; who in Milan heap financial rewards on a pedestrian and blind manual skill à la 1848; who in Turin adulate a painting typical of pensioned-off government functionaries; and in Venice glorify a farraginous rubbish heap turned out by fossilized alchemists! In short, we rise up against the superficiality, banality, and slovenly corner-workshop facility that makes most of the widely respected artists in every region of Italy worthy, instead, of the deepest contempt.

Out with you, then, bought-and-sold restorers of hack paintings! Out with you, archaeologists infected with chronic necrophilia! Out, critics, you complaisant panderers! Out, gouty academics, besotted and ignorant professors! Out!

Go ask those high priests of the True Cult, those guardians of the Aesthetic Laws, where the works of Giovanni Segantini are to be seen today; ask them why the official commissions do not even recognize the existence of Gaetano Previati; ask them where Medardo Rosso's sculpture is appreciated at its true worth! . . . And who takes the trouble to think about the artists who don't have twenty years of struggles and sufferings behind them but nonetheless are preparing works destined to bring honor to the homeland? Oh no, those critics ever ready to sell themselves have very different interests to defend! The exhibitions, the competitions, and the superficial and never-disinterested critics are what condemn Italian art to what is, plainly speaking, prostitution!

And what should we say about the "specialists"? Come, come! Let's make an end once and for all to the Portraitists, the Genreists, the Lake Painters, the Mountain Painters!—We have put up with them quite enough, with all those impotent painters of rustic weekends!

Let us make an end also to the defacers of marble who clutter up our piazzas and profane our cemeteries! An end to the quick-money architecture of the jobbers of reinforced concrete! An end to the common run of decorators, the fakers of ceramics, the poster painters who sell themselves, and the slovenly and thick-headed illustrators!

And here are our CONCLUSIONS resolute and in a nutshell. With our enthusiastic adherence to Futurism we aim:

1. To destroy the cult of the past, the obsession with all things old, academic pedantry, and formalism

2. To cast our scorn profoundly on every last form of imitation

3. To exalt every form of originality, even if foolhardy, even if extremely violent



Boccioni in his studio in front of his painting *Matter* (*Materia,* no. 60), ca. 1912. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milano. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

4. To bear bravely and proudly the smear of "madness" with which they try to gag all innovators

5. To look on the lot of art critics as at one and the same time useless and dangerous

6. To rebel against the tyranny of the words "harmony" and "good taste," expressions so elastic that they can just as easily be used to demolish the art of Rembrandt, Goya, and Rodin as well

7. To sweep out of the mental field of art all themes and subjects already exploited

8. To render and magnify the life of today, incessantly and tumultuously transformed by science triumphant.

Let the dead be buried in the deepest bowels of the earth! Let the future's threshold be swept clean of mummies! Make way for the young, the violent, the headstrong!

Painter Umberto Boccioni (Milan)
Painter Carlo Dalmazzo Carrà (Milan)
Painter Luigi Russolo (Milan)
Painter Giacomo Balla (Rome)
Painter Gino Severini (Paris)

TECHNICAL MANIFESTO OF FUTURIST PAINTING

April 11, 1910

In the first manifesto launched by us on March 8, 1910, from the stage of the Politeama Chiarella in Turin, we expressed our deep disgust, our haughty contempt, our joyful rebellion against the vulgarity, the mediocrity, and the fanatical and snobbish cult of the past which are suffocating art in our country.

At that point we were concerned with the relations existing between us and society. Today, however, with this second manifesto, we resolutely break away from any and every merely relative consideration and soar to the highest expressions of the pictorial absolute.

Our desire for truth cannot be satisfied by traditional Form or by traditional Color!

Gesture, for us, will no longer be *a single moment* within the universal dynamism brought to a sudden stop: It will be, outrightly, *dynamic sensation* given permanent form.

Everything is in movement, everything rushes forward, everything is in constant swift change. A figure is never stable in front of us but is incessantly appearing and disappearing. Because images persist on the retina, things in movement multiply, change form, follow one upon the other like vibrations within the space they traverse. Thus a horse in swift course does not have four legs: It has twenty, and their movements are triangular.

Everything in art is merely convention, and yesterday's truths are today, for us, simply lies.

We affirm once again that, to be a work of art, the portrait neither can nor ought to resemble its sitter and that the painter has within himself all the landscapes he may ever wish to picture. To paint a figure one should not paint it as something in itself; one needs to make visible its *atmosphere.*

Space no longer exists; a street soaked by rain and lit by electric light plunges deep into the earth's center. The sun is thousands of kilometers distant from us; but the house directly in front of us, may it not strike our eye as wedged and mounted into the solar disk? Who can still believe bodies are opaque when our heightened and multiplied sensibilities make us intuit the obscure manifestations of spiritualistic phenomena? Why do we need to continue to create without taking into account our power of sight, which itself can give results entirely like those of X-rays?

Innumerable examples support what we state here.

The sixteen people you have around you in a tram in rapid motion are one, ten, four, three; they stand in place and at the same time are in movement; they go and come, are projected out into the street and swallowed up by a patch of sunlight, then suddenly are back in their seats: perduring symbols of the universal vibration. And at times it happens that, on the cheek of the person we are speaking with in the street, we see a horse that passes by a good way off. Our bodies enter into the very sofas we sit on and the sofas themselves enter into us, in the same way as the passing tram enters into the houses which, in their turn, hurl themselves on the tram and become one with it.

The way pictures are constructed is stupidly

traditional. Painters have always shown us things and persons as if set directly in front of us. We however will put the *viewer* himself in the center of the picture.

As in all the fields of human thought, the inveterate obscurantisms of dogma have been replaced by enlightened individual investigation. And so, likewise, in our art the academic tradition must inevitably give way to an invigorating current of individual liberty.

We desire to take our place again in life itself. Today's science, rejecting its past, answers to the material needs of our time; art no less, rejecting its own past, should respond to the intellectual needs of our time. Our new awareness no longer lets us view man as the center of universal life. For us, a man's pain is interesting no less but no more than that of an electric bulb which, functioning, suffers and endures agonies and cries out in the most lacerating expressions of color; and the musicality of the line and folds of a modern garment have, for us, an emotional and symbolic power entirely like that the nude had for the old masters.

In order to conceive and comprehend the new beauties of a modern picture the soul must become pure again, the eye must free itself from the veil cast over it by atavism and culture and consider the only controlling factor to be Nature, certainly not the Museum!

Then at last everyone will become aware that it is not brown that courses beneath our epidermis but instead that yellow glows there, red blazes there, green and azure and violet dance there, voluptuous and inviting! How can one still think of a human face as rosy pink when our new nocturnal life has given us, undeniably, a double life? The human face is yellow, is red, is green, is blue, is violet. The pallor of a woman eyeing a jeweler's showcase is more iridescent than all the prisms of the jewels that fascinate her.

The possibilities we sense in paint cannot simply be murmured. We are making them sing and shout in our canvases which blast out deafening and triumphal fanfares.

And that is why your eyes, so long accustomed to dusky dimness, will be opened to the most brilliant visions of light. The very shadows we will paint will be more pregnant with light than our predecessors' brightest highlights, and our pictures, compared with those stored away in the museums, will glow like the most resplendent day counterposed to the most sepulchral night.

This, naturally, leads us to conclude that painting cannot subsist without *Divisionism*. Yet Divisionism, in our concept, is not a *technical means* that can be methodically learned and applied. Divisionism, for the modern painter, must be a *congenital complementarity*, something we judge essential and indispensable.

And to end with, we reject the facile accusation of "baroquism" aimed against us. The ideas set forth here have derived solely from our own heightened sensibility. Whereas "baroquism" signifies artifice, maniacal and marrowless virtuosity, the Art we envisage is compounded entirely of spontaneity and potency.

WE PROCLAIM:

1. That congenital complementarity is an absolute necessity in painting, like free verse in poetry and polyphony in music
2. That the dynamism universal in all things must be rendered as the sensation of that dynamism itself
3. That in interpreting Nature one needs sincerity and a virgin approach
4. That motion and light destroy the material nature and look of solid bodies.

WE FIGHT:

1. Against the false gloss and glazing of modern pictures to make them look old
2. Against the superficial and elementary archaism to be gotten from using flat colors, which reduces painting to an impotent synthesis not only infantile but grotesque
3. Against the false would-be Futurism of the Secessionists and Independents, those new academics found in every country
4. Against the nude in painting, which is no less boringly insipid and depressing than adultery in literature.

You think us mad. Quite the contrary: We are the Primitives of a new and completely transformed sensibility.

Outside the atmosphere in which we ourselves live, there are only glum shadows. We Futurists are climbing toward the loftiest and most radiant summits, and we proclaim ourselves Lords of the Light because, already, we are drinking from the living founts of the Sun.

Painter UMBERTO BOCCIONI (Milan)
Painter CARLO DALMAZZO CARRÀ (Milan)
Painter LUIGI RUSSOLO (Milan)
Painter GIACOMO BALLA (Rome)
Painter GINO SEVERINI (Paris)

FUTURIST PAINTING

by Umberto Boccioni

Lecture delivered at the Circolo Artistico, Rome, May 29, 1911

I hope, friends, that it will give you pleasure to follow our vehement look into the future, and that you will join me in laughing at those stiffnecks who are forever looking backward. My friends, just imagine when the superficial, pretentious public find themselves face to face with paintings by a Futurist! When they look at and into our canvases with our theories in mind? We will be smiling and serene when that day comes, as we have always been in the middle of a howling mob who regularly mock anything they do not understand. Those who attack and insult us daily do not know that the human mind operates between two horizon lines, the *absolute* and the *relative*, both equally infinite, and draws between them the jagged and painful line of the *possible*.

In time the picture as we know it will suffice no longer. Its immobility will be an archaism in the vertiginous movement of human life. The human eye will see colors as feelings materialized. Colors, now multiplied, will not need forms to be understood, and pictorial works will become whirling musical compositions of enormous colored gases. On a stage free of horizons, these works will excite and electrify the complex soul of a crowd we cannot yet conceive of.

We Futurists find in our daily evolution an occasional tendency parallel to the *Cubists*. But right from the start let us declare that the word *Cubism* means nothing; painting has always aspired to the sense of volume among many

aims, and, strictly speaking, this is the most external and least profound aspect of the school that passes under that name. How, in fact, can one include under the name *Cubism* the complex reproduction of an object, that is, the integral reconstruction of the internal and external forms that make it up?

Having brushed aside that word, we want to ask our detractors who laughed at our *Technical Manifesto* why, when news comes from France of a revolutionary tendency having some analogy with ours, some of them now rush to think about it and discuss it? Why did they laugh when we Italians, in this country still littered with ruins and populated by aesthetic mummies, denied that bodies were opaque [and affirmed] that images be multiplied, bodies compenetrated, details dislocated, and the supreme necessity of making the viewer the center of the picture?

This aspiration to move images about at will and consequently create a hieroglyphics of music, this return to pure pictorial values to ensure the triumph of a more inward, thus a more abstract art—this violent aspiration has brought us nothing but contumely and derision from long-lived skeptics in Italy and elsewhere.

We declare that what passes under the name of Cubism is only a transitional tendency, and that our aspirations to a truly abstract painting are much more substantial. We believe that everything we have called simultaneity of states of mind—that means representing the connections between what is remembered and what is seen—is merely an intermediate stage, a bridge between the old traditional painting and the Futurist.

The public that protests before our canvases does not know that in those canvases we find too many veristic forms and obvious details of imitation and that we dream of bringing our pictures to life on the day of liberation with pure quantities, pure dimensions, pure colorings of things newly transfigured and created.

We think that every physical body, besides having volume, that is, the values of tonality, has its own special physiognomy, a tendency of its lines to show us its true character, that I would call *anarchical*, or the absolute predominance of its own self, eternally and fatally at war with the world outside it.

There being no penal code, as there is for common crimes, that punishes offenses against the sacred majesty of traditional aesthetics, naturally the public, like all barbaric agglomerations, makes summary justice of ideas offensive to the *Establishment*... this being its *unique* way of conceiving the right.

This may explain the degree of fury, unusual in aesthetic controversies, behind the assault from the press, the public, and colleagues sedentary or shop-minded on our *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* when it was barely printed. Insults from the credulous, calumnies from the envious, sneers from skeptics and ignorant alike, left us completely indifferent! We knew that our manifesto, being a work of art and therefore existing in the absolute, demanded of the reader not only a high intelligence but also a special predisposition to make contact with pure intuition. Our serenity and calm, at which even Futurism's enemies marvel, come to us from our profound compassion for all who have never been concerned with other than superficial and relative questions yet seek to disprove what soars to the heights of the spirit, peaks reached only after long, scrupulous preparation and unceasing communion with the outside world.

If it is true that Relativity governs the world, unfortunately it is also true that without the lightning flashes of the Absolute, which are granted only to the few, humanity would proceed into darkness, indeed would cease to exist for its incapacity to recognize its own existence! And to the best of my knowledge that flash of understanding never comes through explanations or preambles; one must assume that those who rail at us have very small minds if they cannot comprehend that the *absolute* is *eternal aspiration* and that *work* is what is *relative*; that to create is already to circumscribe; that to comment is to circumscribe what is circumscribed, is to subdivide the divided, to reduce to the minimum, to annihilate!

So my explanations of the essence of our *Technical Manifesto* are a concession to the relativity of life itself!

The world does not understand the eternal, mysterious evolution of the spirit until some great specific fact presents it with a limit and a recognizable principle. But for the thinker who unfailingly sets limits and principles, that one limit and principle do not exist. For this reason, when one individual cries out into the night: *This is the truth!*, the sleeping world which always favors the truisms awakes with howls and protests. That is why everybody cries out nowadays for a Christian era and denies that a scientific era has already been born. They do not deny, of course, that everything in the world today may be analyzed scientifically, but they do deny that this is the major factor in the modern psyche, entirely comparable for us with the natural events, the major transformations, in historical and prehistorical times. They deny that scientific discoveries have completely remade the mental fabric of the world, that a radical change has come about in our spirit, and that, just as animal species have multiplied in form, structure, and character with altered conditions of existence, so electricity and telegraphy, steam and aviation have deepened the gap in mental difference between ourselves and our grandfathers (now so much wider than between them and, for example, the century of Aristotle). And thus our conviction that our time initiates a new era naming us *the primitives of a new, completely transformed sensibility*.

In consequence, this new condition of scientific relativity is responsible for our new feeling about seeking the absolute. We painters (for I shall be speaking about painting) feel that we divine in this a psychic force that empowers the senses to perceive what has never been perceived before. We think that if everything tends toward *Unity*, man has so far perceived in unity only the miserable, blind, infantile decomposition of things!

Science, as we see it, has driven us back into a marvelous higher barbarism. The art of today is an exponent of that barbarism—which starts in the French Impressionists, those true scientific temperaments—which throws itself with cries and ardent passions into the quest for a synthesis, for the ultimate reason behind the infinity of new elements that science has given us.

All historical periods resemble each other, and the compelling force of genius lies in its exact, mathematical perception, conscious or unconscious, of its own historical moment.

For this reason we declare to be absolutely insignificant the work of such painters as Sargent, Sartorio, or Zuloaga possessing nothing that corresponds to the pulse of the times. I could cite a number infinitely greater than three major or minor painters, all equally outside of art despite their talent.

A superficial critic [deleted: Oietti] said a few years back that we were heading toward the mid-seventeenth century.... His mistake was in taking seriously merely current fashions in publishing (insignificant pauses on the high road to universal modern aspirations which can only be expounded by art).

We say, on the contrary, that the whole social life of our time shows a primitive uncertainty to be in the absolute ascendant, which to a thinker's deep eye—indifferent to minor

deviations—looks like the dawn of a radiant historical new day.

In art, philosophy, or politics, values are collapsing in uproar, outcry, blood! We live in an environment overfull of detritus, and we should tune our souls to the racket of wrecking machines. We Futurists, who know how to wait, have destroyed in ourselves all traces of nostalgia and regret, and we and those with us long to live in the future. We will never look to the past for an ideal of definitive beauty, and so we love the aesthetic expressions of our time however they present themselves, crude as they may look and only roughly cleaned of the slag from the newest fusions.

We want to combat the stupid blindness of the masses and the fear of newness in those discouraged minorities who unconsciously absorb the practices and uses of modern life, yet repudiate everything that spiritually emanates from this new life or symbolizes it. Indeed one can say that scorn and derision are always heaped on the works that attempt to count the essential eternities.

However vehemently we may aspire to perfection, we love those masterpieces that still bear the marks of a collision between a world collapsing and one in birth. In the works of our time we love that look of infinite and painful experimentation which reveals the inexperience of the true creator at grips with a new material. We love those works because the truly new art will spring from them, yearned for by people all over Europe for a century now and glimpsed in the heroic endeavors of a few revolutionary artists, most of whom perished as victims of commercialism and official painting.

Someone has reminded us that all transformation in art as in life occurs only by slow evolution, and that nothing is separated from the past by a sharp clean cut. We reply that the time of transformations is now over, that the evolution has been successful (especially in France during these last fifty years); we deem ourselves primitives because we have seen, right up to yesterday, in what is called modern art the same phenomena that another great crisis produced, when the pagan world became transformed into the Christian world. Then too the conceptions of the divine essence and of men's destinies changed completely, but still the artist's hand drew forms bound to the pagan tradition. Fourth- and fifth-century sarcophagi, for example, display a strange mélange of Christian subjects set forth in the old pagan type of form and execution.

It may be argued that many of the newest modes of feeling have been finding expression over the past century but always in the tradition handed down to us from the classics, always in what is more or less colored drawing and form; and [it may be held that] the great French Impressionists and their European ramifications, through Seurat's Divisionism, Gauguin's Synthetism, the neo-Idealist and Symbolist synthetism of the Rosicrucian painters, and up to the most modern Post-Impressionists or the Cubists or those called in France today the Wild Ones [Fauves], have been only transitional generations.

We Futurists, who feel ourselves in the world's avant-garde, proclaim our complete detachment from the past. We are moving beyond that demoralized dismay the first Christian artists must have felt when they sought to express new values with entirely new forms that did not yet exist, emotion that exalted things never considered before, reality only then beginning to exist but already causing bloodshed and exciting enthusiasms and hopes beyond previous understanding: I speak here of piety, of the Christian faith! Surely you agree Christian art had no choice but to bury or destroy the voluptuous marble images of the pagan gods. Well then, we too are inspired by great faith in our call for the destruction of the museums, libraries, and academies, in our dream of spiritual destruction which has been called blasphemous; our faith is contrary to the Christian faith but equally profound, and no less intransigent toward all that invades, with a past by now hidden, the entirely new religion of the future.

No Greek or Roman marble ever wept: The dying Gaul, Niobe and her children, even Laocoön showed at the most a modest frown compared with the face on the Cross, filled with pain and grief. The human figure became spellbound in the Byzantine mosaics, . . . wept and smiled in Italy, . . . wept and despaired among the barbarians. . . . Now, tell me, what link is there between a Greek marble, a Byzantine marble, and the panel painting of an Italian or Northern primitive? To borrow the words of my great friend, Luigi Russolo, may it not be true that painting owed its marvelous rebirth, its entirely original development, to the easy destruction of the pagan frescoes, graffiti, and mosaics, as compared with the many extant statues of marble and bronze?

When Gauguin said that in art there are only revolutionaries and plagiarists, he put it well. And we who feel we have moved beyond the idea that individuality is sacred as part of humanity and who now proclaim that individuality is sacred for being engaged in an endless, resolute war against humanity—we are the artists in this epoch who will be called revolutionaries. We have the duty to wage daily war against the tyrannies of aesthetic reactionism and to remember that if tyrannies have been checked by guillotine and dagger, petrol and bombs can also be used to liberate us from the museums that dishonor us!

The artist is the translator of the chaos that entangles things. People see colors, hear harmonies, weep, laugh, or hate in life just as artists have demonstrated in art. We wouldn't be able to imagine life in a past epoch without art's translation, for historical dates are meaningless in themselves.

Now then, friends, there is something that sums up our epoch! Something that has never been expressed, has no fixed form, no color, but transfigures objects and is indeed their essence. This true reality is sensation. From this subjective impression of Nature will arise a new aesthetic, expressed in abstract signs dictated by the music of forms or the drama of movements.

Our heart beats for verities born yesterday that call for expression in forms, colors, words, and melodies never used before. Today's artist has obligations that the artist of twenty years ago knew nothing of; for that reason he has no control over the past and no experience that parallels the work of tomorrow's artist who will live in and by himself, will permit no comparisons except with himself, and, unless in severe need, will not communicate with outside persons.

It is very difficult to find a painter who thinks, and now is the time to write finis to the old fable that an artist needs only a good eye! The only painter who sees well is he who thinks well! In truth only the painter who thinks well becomes aware of the phenomena I have called the higher barbarisms that nowadays make so very difficult the artist's struggle to have his work understood.

We have, for example, a public that asks the painter to express gaiety and frivolity, that wants delight and enjoyment along with the aspirations typical of a great decadent civilization . . . and the truly modern artist feels that life around him dictates only expressions of painful fury, of anguished yearning, of morbid curiosity.

A public that calls for joy like some sixteenth-century lord, and a painter who responds with the soul of a modernized Giotto.

A public that wants light, hygiene, sunlit sur-



Boccioni in Rome, 1901.
Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy
private archive, Padua

roundings more open than crowded, yet hangs on its walls the gloomiest daubs found in secondhand shops or the studios of complacent fakers.

A public that travels by automobile and airplane through and above the immobile quiet of old cities geared to the slow pace of sedan chair or litter. A public that chatters about revolution, strikes, and spiritualist séances, and when it comes to artistic values wants to be served on sixteenth-century plates in eighteenth-century gardens, with wigs or pagan nudities, tranquillity and moonlight. . . . How can a thinking person explain the clash of these tendencies, so disparate, that trouble the modern intellectual world?

Only thus: that culture has cast a veil over feeling, has wagered on the law of extremes, on the humanity of a higher barbarism, but still relatively barbaric.

Everybody today, and this is perhaps a fundamental aspect of our epoch, everybody thinks of culture as a refuge from the pain of life. From this comes an atmosphere of skeptical regret that is suffocating us! Those who find no satisfaction in modern artistic manifestations look backward, lamenting the *unique genius*, the lofty and solitary peak surrounded by desert, sighing and dreaming of Michelangelo and Phidias. . . . Those who find no satisfaction in new philosophical concepts of life look backward too, lamenting the waning of the Church, of dogmas and strict religious sentiment, the [old] choice between humbling the body or the triumph of the senses, and they dream of the Christian world and the pagan world. Those who find no satisfaction in modern political and social ideals look backward, fantasizing on Solomon's wisdom, Caesar's iron-fisted law, the Sun King's splendors, Napoleon's great exploits. I could cite a hundred examples of the morbid malaise, the nostalgic discontent of these cultural degenerates, of these delicate spirits ripe for the dynamite in our atmosphere. What is sad today is the impossibility of loving the world that surrounds us, the life we live, the new ideals that guide us.

Especially for us Italians, everything modern is synonymous with ugliness. Milan and other Italian cities, which instead of the usual old traditions have a marvelous present and future in industry and art, are spoken of as something horrendous. To a Venetian, Florentine, or Roman the modern movement is an aberration that must be fled from after first deriding or deploring it. Colorful and excited crowds seem monstrous to the Italian who has spent his noble existence discoursing on past grandeurs of the Patria in his dear little city—once a capital, no doubt—its quiet streets so full of glorious ghosts, closed old palaces, closed gardens, closed minds.

The factories ever roaring and unsleeping give chills to the Italian who has spent a lifetime of study and admiration on the last capital in the back on the right in some palace or other, or on the second arcade on the left in some church, a national monument. . . .

The railroad stations and the iron tracks, so black and so inexorable with their whistles and puffs of smoke, excite horror! Much better to enjoy the sunset on a bench in the Pincio or the shade of an allée in the Boboli Gardens while discussing how to mobilize our troops in twenty-four hours on the Austrian frontier or repeating for the thousandth time [a performance at] the Liston of Piazza San Marco! It is precisely this constant, ignoble antagonism between past and present that is responsible for our political, social, artistic feebleness!

Our fathers liberated us with their blood from the foreign yoke, our professors deliver us back to it morally manacled by the national monument [the grandiose monument in Rome to King Vittorio Emanuele II completed in 1911], slaves offered up to nostalgic foreigners. It is against the mental cowardice of official artists that our Futurist works do battle, against that culture, against that tradition.

It is culture that defends the Greeks and Michelangelo against impressionism in sculpture. It is culture that defends the clear contours of the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento shadows against the luminous atmosphere of modern painting, against Divisionism, and against the psychological synthesis of human types that our epoch alone has created. It is culture that defends the immobile and the static against movement and dynamism in painting. And to all of that we say: *Basta*! Enough!

When we declared that the painter who has a sincere modern temperament must be endowed inevitably with what we called *congenital complementarism*, howls of indignation and protest were raised against this affirmation; it was called an assault on individual liberty, a piece of nonsense, a restriction, a new academicism. The gale passed and now people are beginning to understand the truth of what we affirmed: Divisionism is not a technique! Divisionism is an attitude of the spirit, a stage at which human sensibility has arrived, a way of translating—it is the style of an epoch!

To the usual vulgar objection as to whether we sincerely see things as spots, dots, lines, we can only reply with the old axiom: *Art is not the copy of Nature*. The higher art raises itself, the more distant it becomes from Nature, and the more profound the artist, the more his subjective vision—that is, the world itself—is hopelessly unrecognizable at its first appearance.

The masterworks the world has admired till now will never be found in real life. . . . Marble or bronze statues do not look like men of flesh and blood. Heads violently illuminated amid dark shadows as Rembrandt and the Italian tenebrists saw them, seemed true in their time, but will never be seen or ever were seen in any house or piazza, just as no one ever saw or ever will see eyes like the Empress Theodora's [at Ravenna] or flesh touched with gold like [that of Rembrandt's] Flora. What the public admires in the old pictures—the splendor of the flesh, the fusion of tonalities, the warmth of coloring—would in real life signify gloom, filth, chlorosis, putrefaction! The world is mere outward appearance. The real world is within us, and the artist leaves ten thousand worlds behind him before becoming one with the world that resembles himself.

Therefore, Divisionism, that attitude of the spirit, is as valid for us as the modeled form was for the Greeks and Romans, mosaic for the Byzantines, clear contours for the [Quattrocento] Primitives, synthetic chiaroscuro for the Cinquecento artists. And precisely because we believe complementarism to be an attitude of the spirit, it must be inborn in the modern painter. This divides us absolutely from the Italian Divisionists of yesterday for whom (given their culture) that truth was only grafted onto a trunk already old.

Those theorists, in fact, instead of using Divisionist perception as we do, looked at the world through conventional eyes (that is, as culture had formed them), and then artificially applied the theory of complementary colors. Methodically distributing on the canvas equal amounts of a color and its complementary, and forcing themselves to find the so-called intonation, they ended up instead by completely destroying everything through pure color. . . . They believed they could remake the practice of painting with what was correct in chemical practice. And because the union of two colors that are complementary in the spectrum produces white light in nature, they thought the union of two complementary colors in paint ought to give the same result on canvas. Previati observes in his book on the scientific principles of Divisionism that red and blue-green light in the spectrum produce white light when united but give only an opaque gray when translated into colored substances such as vermilion and emerald green. Greenish yellow and violet are complementary and ought to give white light, but the corresponding colors in paint produce only a sorry-looking reddish-grayish green; an even worse gray comes from combining orange paint with indigo, another pair of colors which in combination are transformed into white light in the spectrum. They [the Divisionists] did not realize that the colored molecules that form white light are different from those in the colored substances we use for painting. They did not stop to think that the mixing of two colored substances does not result in a chemical transformation, consequently not in a molecular system that would absorb light in a unified manner; the absorbent faculties of each color remain active, and since every absorption means a subtraction of light, which is equivalent to saying it tends toward black, any mixture of two colored substances must bring about a double subtraction of light, a doubling of darkness.

They believed they could save the day by placing two complementary colors close to each other instead of mixing them. But with this procedure, which was the very basis of their Divisionism, they ended by making the same visual rather than material impression, and the dirty color, though slightly attenuated, persisted.

In such an entirely intuitive field as art, this rigid application of a scientific procedure produced oppressive grays, monotony, embalmed objects, and discouragement in the artists and the public.

We, on the contrary, bring an intuitive disorder in distributing our colors that agrees with the explicable disorder in the universe, and we achieve results having new value in technique and feeling! To put mixed colors on the canvas means to lose 75 percent in luminosity, in comparison with using pure colors. Now, an artist cannot be indifferent to that loss, feeling the imperious need within himself to make his own work come alive in perfect response to his own time.

How can one understand a painting that delights in gloom when humanity is preparing to fly into the sun? Everything in the modern consciousness aspires to luminosity! In its love for light our epoch shows its primitive stage, since it is exactly in primitive epochs that one finds this character of luminosity, of synthesis, of simplicity, in contradistinction to the contrived and complicated techniques of decadent eras.

Another battle being fought today is between the cultural attitude of the public and the modern picture which almost always has a blue and violet tonality.

This general tonality is looked on as degenerative, always bewailed for the absence of our old masters' golden mellowness, the precious warmth of their browns, the knowing saturation of their greens, the somber intensity of their crimsons. . . . As always, culture, atavism, and memory—in short, the Museum—superimpose themselves on our developing perception of the world as pure and spiritual, and now transformed by the conquest of air. This sensitivity to atmosphere characterizes modern painting and thus fosters the blue and the violet to which the retinas of people were formerly not sensitive, just as they had not conquered electricity though undoubtedly it existed. The public complains of the violent colors, dissonances, inharmonics, without stopping to think that our eyes and our visual enjoyment are still crude and barbarous compared with those of the future, when the picture as we know it, with its infantile immobile materiality, will no longer suffice once ever more numerous colors will



Boccioni's studio in Milan, ca. 1912–13.
Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

express feelings in and for themselves quite beyond the control of forms.

No one who is a true artist will doubt that his own technique is an emanation of his own spirit and that in Divisionism our time is finding its spiritual expression.

It is a fact that the dotting, the tiny brushstrokes, and the streaking that horrify the partisans of superficial facility unquestionably give a greater expressive and communicative force to painting, because every sign however tiny bears the imprint of the individual who made it. And from this it follows that we are superior verists since we imitate intuitively the procedure of light rays striking bodies and coloring them. This is the only way we conceive the imitation of Nature.

In opting for Divisionism we despise such vulgar tricks as taking advantage of irregularities in the grain of the canvas, or the strange accidents of liquids, varnishes, glazes, and patinas; all these artificial means can be relied on to produce vulgar and superficial effects and, as I said, characterize paintings in a decadent period.

It is logical that those who profit from such means should continually renounce that beautiful, intentional, personal aspiration which obliges us, for our part, to connect almost mathematically the smallest dot on the canvas, every stroke of the brush however negligible, with the global synthesis of the picture as a whole.

To confuse the great inner vision of the true artist with the so-called broad technique would be absurd, for this is purely external and deserves only contempt, based on the acrobatic dexterity of those who boast of turning out a picture with twenty strokes of the brush. To me it seems quite unnecessary to demonstrate, for example, that Segantini, through smoothing down and dotting, has an immensely more ample and profound technique than the well-known broad technique of Zorn.

And so it is that Divisionism, like polyphony in music, like a stanza orchestrated in free verse in poetry, represents an effort of greater intensity and artistic complexity, a vehement aspiration toward what we call the symphonic and polychromatic unity of the picture that becomes ever more a universal synthesis.

We have been accused, wrongly, of being nothing more than new Impressionists. I am anxious to clarify this point so as to establish the difference, the abyss, that *separates* us from the French Impressionists and the new Post-Impressionists who, through Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Denis, are now led by Matisse, Picasso, and others. These last-named, who have made such a sensation in France and most recently at the Grafton Gallery in England, are together with the Slavs the link joining us and the Impressionists.

But if the Post-Impressionists have risen above the accidental analytical reproduction of Nature (and not all of them have done so), if, with admirable audacity, they make much of avoiding the distinctive *episode* that was the Impressionists' hallmark, and if they have felt the need for synthesis and the necessity of style—something the great personalities among the Impressionists left no trace of—their quest for style shows them desiring a school and a tradition, and makes them worshipers of the great masters with whom they believe they can drink together from the great springs of Art. All of this leads them back to an archaic primitivism that vaunts a barbarous inexperience, a clumsy immobility, an absolute disdain for symphonic fusions—all to the benefit of the flat tints and contours by now grown tiresome. True enough, they have sensed Manet's grand truth, that only by making himself primitive can the artist become great and original, but they have drawn the wrong conclusions from it. . . . They have understood that painting aspires to the apogee of large-scale decoration and that the drawing of children, illiterates, and the insane is infinitely superior to all the magniloquences of the official painting of our day and the past, but in their anxiety (sincere, to be sure) for structure they have imitated Giotto's primitive forerunners and followers, the drawings of cavemen and of savages—in short, whatever in the world is most ingenuous and rudimentary.

They have not understood that every epoch has its primitives, that if we want to war against the higher barbarism of culture we must pit against them the higher primitivism of a genuinely modern intuition. Fifty years from now our black, grimy, noisy, slow, imperfect locomotives will seem barbarous and primitive, yet they certainly represent a notable superiority of development and complexity of aspirations when compared with the stagecoach, horse, or just plain nothing of five hundred years ago.

The primitivism of the Post-Impressionists looks back to the past in its love for the crudely rendered nude, its lifeless and useless still lifes, its mystico-Catholic subjects, its willfully ingenuous forms hieratically mummified. We, however, feeling ourselves the primitives of a new epoch, act accordingly in our deliberate choice of subjects and our unconditional refusal to repeat those already exhausted.

We keep away from the countryside, for example, linked to it by few nostalgic memories, by now scarcely viable, and seek our symbols in the city and in its life, which is foolishly called artificial.

Night life, with its women and men marvelously bent on forgetting their daytime life; the panting factories that incessantly produce wealth for the powerful; the geometrical city landscapes enameled with gemstones, mirrors, lights: All of this creates around us an unexplored atmosphere that fascinates us, and into it we fling ourselves to conquer the future! All in all, in our art we give importance to everything that forgets the past and the present to aspire toward the future. Only becoming—moving forward—has value for us! If we take our distance from the Post-Impressionists, all the more reason to move away from the French Impressionists, exactly because we as children of our time, have gone beyond them by natural evolution.

The Impressionists, whom I have called scientific temperaments, were the real initiators of the break with the past. After their arrival a new light colored the world. They recreated it and labored throughout their existence to discover new elements that our epoch has made its own, because on these, as on new foundations, would rise the luminous edifice of the future Aesthetic.

They were compelled to experiment in their works with the new ways of seeing that they tore away from the world. However much these experiments had the winged character of a song, it was logical that they remained in a partial state, objective and almost impassive, that the search for the means and the nature of the method, completely experimental, imposed on them. Reproducing the truth was for them not a means toward constructing a lyrical inner vision; it was the aim in itself, the picture itself, in which converged a thousand treasures of loving observation. . . .

With the Impressionists, nonetheless, stones, pine woods, animals begin to change form, dimensions, color. However timidly, their figures and their objects are already the nucleus of an atmospheric vibration: Pure reality brings into the picture lines and forms overlooked until now, perhaps never seen; the overall tonality, through the abolition of black and the use of complementary colors and violet, has changed completely. To avoid the conventional and academic pictorial construction they completely banned historical or literary or fantastic subjects and compositions, in short all precious manifestations of subjectivity. With this the artist—that

marvelous being—seems to be destroying himself to become merged and identified with nature, and to survive only through bringing forth the revelation of new mysteries. But this overambitious sacrifice brought with it necessarily an almost complete absence of style.

True, they tried to sing of new aspects of contemporary life, but the quest for new means so preoccupied them that their song ceased on the surface. They heaped detail on detail, but no law disciplined their canvases; they mistook appearance for reality; they subjected light to the relativity of the hour and the fleeting moment instead of seeing it as absolute idea. Preoccupied with seizing tone in its immediacy, they subjugated themselves to all the accidents of time and place and reproduced swiftly passing and fragmentary scenes, fatally relegating their great innovations to the purely formal domain. The emotion their works give off is limited and relative, dependent on the viewer's own experience; and the execution of the works provides a large part of their value. In short, they reproduced almost without discrimination whatever passed before their eyes, limpid and serene as those of science itself, and their scrupulously weighed and controlled works have not that outcry, longing, and passion that set colors afire and do violence to form! That passion that makes a work hypnotize, grip, and engross us, sweeping us into infinity!

Our kind of impressionism, on the contrary, is absolutely spiritual, since it seeks to render, more than any optical and analytical impression, the psychic and synthetic impression of a thing. With us, there occurs none of that uncoupling that leaves anemic almost all the pictures now publicly exhibited, no first impression then subjected to cultural dictates, to the means used, and to all the accidental factors that surround us in life. Instead, the impression itself is translated onto the canvas stripped of those lifelike details which may sometimes reward the painter as craftsman but always work to the detriment of the ultimate aim of art: emotion. We wish to attain, and are attaining, what is eternal in the impression, not the impression as execution arrested at approximate reproduction but as the sensation of the thing, grasped and defined in its essential lines.

The Impressionists intuited that to sweep away the culture intruding between the vision and the execution, what was needed was immediacy, that is, unity in creation. But placing themselves in front of real things brought them impressions that were outward and fragmentary rather than inward and definitive.

The myopic critics are surprised to find that the principles we are preaching in Italy are already partly known in other countries; many of our own attitudes, too, would be all but useless in France, Germany, Scandinavia, America. Those critics should come to see that in Italy there has not yet been any truly modern painting except for Segantini, Pelizza, Previati, all neglected if not completely ignored by the broad Italian public. Let them get it into their heads that since Tiepolo, with the above exceptions and an occasional artist in the group called the Macchiaioli, there has not been a single picture that is worth the most mediocre sketch by any of the artists who flourished in France from Manet to Gauguin, from Puvis de Chavannes to Maurice Denis. And I have named Segantini, Pelizza, and Previati because we consider them the last great figures of a time now dead. Indeed, if criticism were to go deeper still, I would have to say that if Segantini has finally become so widely admired, abroad especially, it is thanks to his close kinship with Millet, to his backwardness in expressing himself, and to his conception of a picture, still quite panoramic and traditional in the elements that make it up.

Previati, however, is truly the first to attempt to express by means of light itself a new emotion outside of the conventional reproduction of forms and colors. He cuts some of the innumerable ties that connect us to the past and to the future as well. With him, forms commence to speak like music, solid bodies aspire to become atmosphere and spirit, and the subject is ripe to transform itself into *state of mind*.

And so, with the mention of musical forms, spiritual volumes, and the *state of mind* as the subject, I have arrived at the nucleus of Futurist painting.

First let me say that we think the true modern artist can only paint the invisible, cloaking it in the lights and shadows that emanate from its own soul. If our adversaries were not motivated purely by provincialism, mediocrity, and fear of innovation, they would understand all the transfigurations that light brings to solid bodies, all the immateriality that things and animals undergo in light's colored vibrations; they would understand the symbolic significance of our famous phrase about the divans that enter into us and the horses' legs that multiply. The usual public that considers itself interested in art applies to our work its old idea of a picture as panorama and perspective and neither thinks nor understands that in modern life nothing is contemplated at length, as in the past; that the sun itself is shattered into tiny fragments in the incandescent light of electric bulbs and the glitter of steel; that in the conditions of velocity that we live in the objects around us are in continual flight, made fluid, stretched to infinity, existing only as luminous apparitions; that the radiant fusion between environment and figures gives to a modern picture a musical value never achieved before.

In our epoch, in which distances, heights, and depths are disappearing, the volume and opacity of solid bodies have become only old lies. Those who say that we perceive through our five senses are repeating an old fable: Our senses have become as multiple as our pores and have so interpenetrated each other that whoever speaks of painting, music, poetry, architecture as separate entities is repeating rancid scholastic formulas grown old and cold. We Futurists have progressed beyond all that and already we intuit the future millennia.

Today, with our lives becoming shorter and more intense, mobility and velocity have taken the place of the fixed and static and the present exists only as a transition to the future; what we have called *pictorial dynamism* is one of the most brilliant artistic intuitions of our time. We want physical forces to be diffused into the environment and to superpose and flood over one the other like vibrations, caught in the vortex of those vibrations that together intensify the overall light in a painting.

As regards dynamism, for instance, we say that gestures have been depicted until now in only the moment of their action, or at most in a synthesis of gesture that amounts to one gesture summing up the many. We, on the contrary, shall give visible form to the will that brings about the movement, the sensation of the gesture, that is, the gesture in the act of making itself visible. And to cite an example from another Futurist painter, my good and great friend Carlo Carrà, I will tell you that when we paint, say, a man riding a bicycle at high speed we will strive to reproduce the instinct of dash that determines the act itself, not the racer's physical appearance in action. It does not bother us that the racer's head might impinge on the profile of the wheel or his body become elongated, lost behind him in infinite vibrations as an apparent optical error, because it is the sensation of the race, not the racer, that we aim to render. In short, our Futurist hypersensibility guides us, endowing us already with that sixth sense that science struggles in vain to catalogue and define. In us it has already taken form. For us all values are gone, all laws over-

come, all chains broken. The artist's individuality, now free at last, lives in the eternal absolute.

So far I have limited my talk to explaining a few of the ideas on forms and colors that appeared in the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*. I have not yet explained our true beliefs concerning Futurist painting: that is, how we believe that the finality of forms and colors, their ultimate aims, apply to the true Futurist spirit.

To express any idea of sorrow, the painter always resorted, until today, to reproducing the scene, the site, or the thing that gave rise to it. The development of this concept was first given visible form in the objective manner, by copying a particularly sorrowful face; thus sadness was not yet conceived as something in itself but only as it manifested itself to our senses; in the subjective manner, however, diverse elements or attributes of sorrow were synthesized into a symbol, which meant that the artist was moving toward a free subjective concept. But even in this higher form the human figure was always formally reproduced, as, for example, in Dürer's engraved *Melancholia* or Michelangelo's fresco of the prophet Jeremiah. In time the objective approach itself also became universalized; that is, as the artist's comprehension broadened he realized that beyond his own sorrow there was the sorrow of things, of plants, of the atmosphere, and thus was born the landscape with all its derivatives. However, this progress toward liberation from what is fixed and determined—this forward step taken in our day—remains nonetheless an objective expression which will be left behind. How will the outside world, present and future, rise through our painting to a universal, subjective expression?

It will be *sensation* that must suggest to the painter states of color and states of form, so that forms and colors will become expressive in themselves, without recourse to the formal representation of objects. It will be through emotion that these objects will dictate the rhythm of signs and the abstract color scales which will become the new form and the new color and will speak to the eye like music to the ear.

What will the Futurist painting look like that intuits and proposes all this? What will we put on our canvases, we for whom solid bodies are only atmosphere condensed and minerals, plants, animals of that same nature? What will our plastic treatment be like, if we consider it puerile to reproduce the quality of the material and wish to convey the utmost spirituality with the utmost of painting, that is, visual sensation?

Only that painting will be Futurist whose colors represent and communicate a sentiment with the least possible recourse to the solid forms that gave rise to it. If the Greeks and Michelangelo have given the type of what is solid, and human, we will render sensation as the type of the spirit.

If it has been said by Watts that he painted ideas, which comes down to applying traditional forms and colors to purely literary and philosophical visions, we reply that we paint sensation, because we wish to remain consistently within the domain of painting. In point of fact, in painting the pure sensation we close off the idea before it becomes localized in one particular sense and determines itself as either music, poetry, painting, or architecture. But we rise again to the first universal sensation which our Futurist spirit already perceives, as I have said, thanks to the multiplicity and interpenetration of all the senses in a single universal which makes us return, across our millennial complexity, to primordial simplicity!

We are truly on the farthest promontory of the centuries! Having arrived at that point, the artist's mind is inevitably led to deny the past. And the more profound the *enslavement of his love for the past*, the sharper will be his denial. In fact, there being no perfect understanding without identifying what is understood, Michelangelo could be denied only by some sublimely ignorant man in the future or by one who rebels against him for having worshiped him overmuch. It is truly painful to turn away from and deny that genius who in the past was the greatest abstract artist to express himself by means of the concrete!

With Michelangelo, anatomical science is transformed into music. With him the human body is architectonic matter for the construction of dreams. Bodies are moved beyond logic because the muscles' melodic lines follow upon one another by laws of music, not by representational laws of logic.

We must go beyond all that! We have gone beyond that first infantile stage when the artist took note of some individual—some chance fact struck his eye and he experienced it in reality, which meant that his work of art had the appearance of a particular episode. And we have gone beyond the second stage, in which the artist raised his sights and, though remaining at the center of his vision, broadened his comprehension to take in other things and other beings; his work of art appears as a universal episode. We are entering the third stage, the Futurist era, in which a new and boundless conception governs the world. The artist himself now disappears, certainly not from humility or terror but because his spirit is identified with that of the world; he is revealed within a whole through pure forms and pure colors denoting the different states of mind that have become the breath of the universal soul. That is why our art will never depict a beloved person or love of the world but will render love itself, certainly not as outside ourselves like an abstract idea but in ourselves and for ourselves through sensation. Thus our art, which could be termed *physical transcendentalism*, is born from the contemplation of Nature, through a completely modern emotion that may seem a fantasy, yet is a new reality!

And so, if solid bodies give rise to states of mind by means of vibrations of forms, then we will draw those vibrations. Velocity will thus be something more than an object in swift motion, and we will perceive it as such: We will draw and paint velocity by rendering the abstract lines that the object in its course has aroused in us. Every verification with the outside world must end up in the created work. The colors should not correspond with the ob-



Umberto Boccioni, ca. 1913–14.
Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

jects because these latter are never themselves colored; this higher realism has generated this truth: If objects appear colored more or less according to the emotion that invests them, why not paint the *sensation* these variations arouse? The same can be said of forms: If an object never has a fixed form but varies according to the emotion of whoever contemplates it, why should we not draw, instead of the object, the rhythm raised in us by that variation in dimensions?

A space filled with vibrations separates the physical body from that invisible which determines the nature of the body's action and will dictate the artistic sensation. In the end, if around us roam spirits impalpable, invisible, and unhearable that will increasingly be studied and observed—fluids of power, antipathy, love that issue from our bodies, deaths that can be foreseen from hundreds of miles away, presentiments that overwhelm us with joy or prostrate us with sorrow—all this is because within us some marvelous sense is awakening into the light of our consciousness. *Sensation is the material covering of the spirit*, and it is now appearing to our prophetic eyes. And, with this, the artist feels himself in all things. In creating he does not look, observe, or measure: He senses, —and the sensations that envelop him dictate the lines and the colors aroused by the emotions that impelled him to act.

Dynamism in painting! And to all sterile and repugnant culture we cry: BASTA! ENOUGH!

Selected Notes by Boccioni for the Lecture on Futurist Painting

The first symptoms of revolution come with the English landscapists, Bonington, Reynolds, Constable, Turner, from whom derive Camille Corot, Théodore Rousseau, Dubigny [sic], etc., then Courbet, Millet, Daumier, then Manet, Monet, and all the Impressionists after 1860.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century

Precursors Monticelli, Delacroix

Georges Seurat, systematic initiator of Divisionism around 1886, died young aged thirty in '91

Naturalistic synthetists Cézanne . . . , Van Gogh, Gauguin, Neo-idealist synthetists Rosicrucians, etc.

Gauguin who worked against Impressionism used to say that a half pound of red gives less color than a pound of red. This proves that to get color you have to increase the [amount of] color, and that strict application of Divisionist ideas about complementary colors leads to a decrease in intensity down to gray. We have that in Segantini, in Fornara, in Vittore Grubicy. Cerebral Impressionists.

Complementarism of color in the general mass and complementarism of tone in the construction of color. A light yellow close to a dark one and so on, up to three or four gradations of yellow or violet or green. Creates a decomposition of the tone, introduces into it a saturation and intensity of the color to which it is added. A yellow becomes extremely yellow and likewise red becomes extremely red.

What the genius lacks is intelligence. The genius has no need of that intelligence which is the binding tie, equilibrium. In many minds the flashes of inspiration are genial, but for that sudden flash to become light, intelligence must be correspondingly weak, and not interfere with its common sense, its limitations. Intelligence is relative, genius absolute.

A marvelous reversal is coming about in us. While art was once spontaneous and everyday work, it is an effortful endeavor with us and cannot adapt itself to the needs of life. Example: medicine with animal intuiting cures. Perhaps new barbarism?

If science were to replace intuition, what art would be possible?

The Idea is the prime intuition. The idea is the essence of the real. Is everything, is what is eternal, is in itself and is not variable.

Everything inexplicable to man became idea. Whence so many phenomena, so many ideas. The idea took concrete form, not understood in itself in time and in space. In time, the higher concrete form became God; in space, became King. Then religiosity took the place of God, the state replaced King. In the latter, up to the ultimate expression of socialism; in the former, up to the ultimate expression of the divine. In all this there is still servitude.

A propos painting

Is a new color scale something original? Does musicality depend on that? Is the subject, the idea, possible in a painting that envisages what is possible to it as the intensified scale? New Academy? I thought one day. Perplexity? Is musicality possible with tragedy, when tragedy must be the ultimate aim? Music would then become means, like painting. In painting is a literary tendency in manifest opposition to one that is musical?

The tragedy of Hamlet, what would it be in music?



Boccioni's palettes in his studio, 1912.
Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

The painting of the invisible

What needs to be painted is not the visible but what has hitherto been held to be invisible, that is, what the clairvoyant painter sees. This will be *natural* for the future; today it may seem only effort and craze for novelty.

An infinity of values have come into being, an infinity of laws.

Humanity has become adult and therefore philosophical. The scientific era of our day is equivalent to the efforts the first men must have made to understand the world by storing things up in their minds. Today it is art that sings myth.

And the cause of the phenomenon? Must think about this.

Uncertainty weighs on the conscience of modern artists.

Social revolution Symbolism

Love for the great masters, for tradition; abolition of the personality, of originality, laws of eternal perfection so as to create in opposition.

Instead of the voice, we will paint the echo. Colored gases of the future. Intensity and velocity of life. Future vision, geometrical, chemical. Relation between our time and gothic architecture. Preponderance of voids over solids.

First there was objective synthesis, now it is subjective synthesis, that is, universal movement pinned down. Impressionist error

Foundering and collapse of materiality with greater spiritual result

TECHNICAL MANIFESTO OF FUTURIST SCULPTURE

April 11, 1912

The sculpture in the monuments and exhibitions of every single city of Europe offers such a pitiable spectacle of barbarisms, stupid clumsinesses, and monotonous imitation that my Futurist eye turns away with profound disgust!

What dominates in every country's sculpture is the blind and dull-witted imitation of the formulas inherited from the past, an imitation encouraged by the double cowardice of slavish submission to tradition and of getting by with the least effort. In the Latin countries we have the infamous heavy hand of Greece and Michelangelo, something endured with a certain seriousness of mind in France and Belgium but with grotesque imbecilism in Italy. In the Germanic countries we have an insipid Hellenizing, pseudo-Gothic ragbag, cranked out on an industrial scale in Berlin or sapped of all backbone by the effeminate finicking of the German professorial lot in Munich. In the Slavic countries, on the other hand, one finds a confused collision between the creatures of archaic Greece and monsters spawned in the Nordic lands and the East: a formless accumulation of influences that range from the excess of abstruse details typical of Asia to the infantile and grotesque inventiveness of Laplanders and Eskimos.

In all these manifestations of sculpture, but also in those with a somewhat greater breath of innovative daring, the same ambiguity is perpetuated: The artist copies the nude and studies classical statuary with the naive conviction that he will be able to light on a style that somehow fits the way people feel nowadays, yet without straying ever so little from the traditional conception of sculptural form: a conception, with its famous "ideal of beauty" that everyone speaks of on bended knee, and that simply never breaks away from the period of Phidias and its subsequent decadence.

And it is all but inexplicable that the thousands of sculptors who continue from generation to generation to turn out their silly puppets have, so far, not asked themselves why the sculpture halls are visited with boredom and even revulsion (when they are not simply deserted), and why monuments are inaugurated in all the public squares of the world amid either incomprehension or general hilarity.

Nothing of the sort happens with painting. Thanks to its continual renewal, slow as it may be, painting stands as the most crystal-clear condemnation of the plagiaristic and sterile work of every single sculptor of our epoch!

Somehow the sculptors simply must convince themselves of this absolute verity: To go on constructing and trying to create with Egyptian, Greek, or Michelangelesque elements is like trying to draw water with a bottomless bucket from a dried-up well!

There can be no renewal whatsoever in an art if its very essence is not renewed, that is, the vision and conception of the line and of the masses that give form to the arabesque. It is not merely by reproducing the outward aspects of contemporary life that art can become the expression of its own time. Yet sculpture, as it has been understood so far by the artists of the last and present centuries, is a monstrous anachronism!

Sculpture has not progressed because of the very limited field allotted to it by the academic concept of the nude. An art that has to undress a man or woman to the buff in order even to begin to act on our feelings is a dead art! Painting, however, has been given a transfusion of fresh blood, has deepened and broadened itself by letting the landscape and surroundings act simultaneously on the human figure or on objects, arriving by those means at our Futurist *compenetration of planes* (*Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting*, April 11, 1910). Sculpture likewise will find a new fountainhead of emotion, and therefore of style, but only when it extends its plasticity to what our barbarous primitiveness has made us consider, up to our day, as subdivided, impalpable, and consequently not expressible through three-dimensional means.

As point of departure we must proceed from the central nucleus of the object we wish to create, and from that basis discover the new laws—that is, the new forms—that link it invisibly but mathematically to the *visible plastic infinite* and to the *inner plastic infinite*. That new plastic art will therefore involve translating the atmospheric planes that link and intersect things into plaster, bronze, glass, wood, and any other



Boccioni standing next to *Synthesis of Human Dynamism* (*Sintesi del dinamismo umano*, 1912; later destroyed), ca. 1913. Photo: Electa Editrice, Milan

material one may wish. This vision, which I have called *physical transcendentalism* (lecture on Futurist painting at the Circolo Artistico in Rome, May 1911), is capable of rendering in three-dimensional forms the attractions and mysterious affinities that create the reciprocal influences that give form to the planes of the objects represented.

Sculpture must therefore make objects come to life by rendering their prolongation into space perceivable, systematic, and three-dimensional: No one can still doubt that one object leaves off where another begins and that there is nothing that surrounds our own body—bottle, automobile, house, tree, street—that does not cut through it and slice it into cross-sections with an arabesque of curves and straight lines.

There have been two attempts at a modern renewal of sculpture: one decorative and concerned with style, the other simply plastic—sculptural—and having to do with material as such. The first remained anonymous and disorganized. It lacked any overall technical and coordinating spirit, and overly bound up as it was with the economic demands of the building trades, it produced no more than pieces of traditional sculpture more or less decoratively synthesized and framed within architectural or decorative motifs or moldings. All the buildings and houses constructed with a claim to modernity provide examples of such efforts carried out in marble, cement, or metal plaques.

The second attempt was more inventive, less commercially restricted, and more poetic, but it was also too isolated and piecemeal. It lacked the synthesizing thinking behind it that could impose an overall principle. And this because, when embarking on a process of renewal, it is not enough to believe with all one's heart: One needs to set up and champion some norm that will mark out clearly the path to be taken. I am alluding to the genius of Medardo Rosso, to an Italian, to the only great modern sculptor who has sought to open a vaster field to sculpture by rendering in three-dimensional art the influences of an environment and the atmospheric links that bind it to the subject.

Of the three other great contemporary sculptors, Constantin Meunier has brought absolutely nothing new to the sculptural sensibility. His statues are almost always masterly fusions of Greek heroics with the athletic humbleness of the longshoreman, sailor, miner. His plastic and constructional approach to sculpture in the round or in low relief is still tied to the Parthenon or the classical hero, though he did attempt for the very first time to create and impart an air of divinity to subjects that had been disdained or left to the cheap sort of realistic reproduction.

Bourdelle brings to the sculptural block a virtually irascible severity of feeling for abstractly architectonic masses. A passionate, stern, sincere, creative temperament, he is unfortunately incapable of liberating himself from a certain archaic influence and from that other, anonymous influence of the swarm of stonecarvers of the Gothic cathedrals.

Rodin is possessed of a vaster spiritual and intellectual agility which permits him to move from the Impressionism of his *Balzac* to the irresolute expressions of his *Burghers of Calais* and to all his other sins committed in the name of Michelangelo. He brings to his sculpture a wayward inspiration, a grandiose lyrical impetus, and these would be well and truly modern had Michelangelo and Donatello not had them, in virtually identical forms, four hundred years ago, and if Rodin himself had used them to put life into a reality conceived in entirely new fashion.

Thus in the work of these three great geniuses we have three influences from different periods: Greek in Meunier, Gothic in Bourdelle, Italian Renaissance in Rodin.

Medardo Rosso's work, on the contrary, is revolutionary, utterly modern, more profound though, necessarily, limited. No heroes or symbols stir his works, but the plane of a woman's or child's forehead suggests a liberation into space that, when the history of the human spirit comes to be written, will be understood as of greater importance than has been recognized in our time. Unfortunately the Impressionistic approach he has been trying out has limited Rosso's efforts to a kind of high or low relief, which shows that he is still conceiving the figure as a world in itself, on a traditional basis and with storytelling intentions.

Medardo Rosso's revolution, for all its great importance, is rooted in an outwardly pictorial concept and neglects the problem of a new construction of planes. The sensual modeling with the thumb is meant to imitate the lightness of Impressionist brushwork and does convey a feeling of lively intimacy. Unfortunately, however, it requires a rapid execution working directly from life, and this deprives a work of art of a feeling of universal creation. Which means that it has the same merits and defects of pictorial Impressionism, and if our own aesthetic revolution grew out of that movement's efforts and explorations, it has carried them further and is moving, instead, to the opposite pole.



Umberto Boccioni, *Antigraceful* (*Antigrazioso*), 1912–13. Photo: Arte Fotografica, Rome. Courtesy Giuseppe Sprovieri

In sculpture as in painting there can be no renewal except through seeking *the style of movement*, that is, through rendering systematic and definitive—thus, synthesizing—what Impressionism offered as fragmentary, accidental, and consequently analytical. And it is out of precisely that systematization of the vibrations of lights and of the interpenetration of planes that Futurist sculpture will come into being. The basis of that new sculpture will be architectonic, not only as regards construction of masses but also because the sculptural block will contain within itself the architectonic elements of the *sculptural environment* in which the subject has its existence.

The natural result will be a *sculpture of environment*.

A Futurist sculptural composition will contain within itself the kind of marvelous mathematical and geometric elements that make up the objects of our time. And these objects will not be disposed alongside the statue as explanatory attributes or separate decorative elements but, in accord with the laws of a new conception of harmony, will be embedded in the muscular lines of a human body. Thus the wheel of some piece of machinery might project from a mechanic's armpit; thus the line of a table could cut right through the head of a man reading; thus the book with its fan of pages could slice the reader's stomach into cross-sections.

Traditionally the statue is clearly cut out and its form stands out against the atmospheric background of the setting in which it is displayed. Futurist painting, for its part, has gone beyond that conception of the rhythmical continuity of lines in a figure and of the figure as something isolated from the background and from the *invisible enveloping space*. "Futurist poetry," according to the poet Marinetti, "after having destroyed traditional meter and created free verse, is now destroying syntax and phrases and sentences constructed in the Latin manner. Futurist poetry is an uninterrupted spontaneous flow of analogies, each summed up intuitively in the essential noun." Whence, "unfettered imagination and words in liberty." Balilla Pratella's Futurist music shatters the tyrannical regular succession of rhythmic beats.

Why should sculpture have to lag behind, fettered by laws no one has the right to impose on it? Let us overturn the whole lot of them, then, and proclaim the *absolute and total abolition of the finite line and of the statue complete in itself.* Let us fling open the figure and let it incorporate within itself whatever may surround it. We proclaim that the environment must become part of the sculptural block conceived as a world in itself and with its own laws; that the sidewalk can climb up on your table and that your head can cross the street while your table lamp suspends its spider web of plaster rays of light between one house and another.

We proclaim that the entire visible world must come sweeping down on us, become one with us, and thereby create a harmony whose only guiding principle will be creative intuition; that a leg, an arm, or an object—in themselves unimportant except as elements of the sculptural rhythm—can be abolished altogether, not in imitation of a Greek or Roman fragment but so as to fit the harmony the author himself aims to create. A sculptural entity, in the same way as a painting, can only resemble itself, because figures and things must have their existence in art over and beyond the logic of what objects look like.

Which means that a figure can have one arm clothed and the other bare, and the various lines of a vase of flowers can play a nimble game of tag between the lines of a hat and a neck.

And it means that transparent planes, panes of glass, sheets of metal, wires, street lamps, or indoor electric lights can indicate the planes, tendencies, tones, semitones of a new reality.



Boccioni's studio in Milan, ca. 1913. Photo: Luciano Pollini.
Courtesy private archive, Padua

And it means too that a new intuitive coloring of white, gray, black can intensify the emotional force of the planes, while the introduction of a colored plane can violently accentuate the abstract significance of the sculpture itself.

What we have said about *force-lines* in painting (preface—manifesto to the catalogue of the First Futurist Exhibition in Paris, October 1911) is no less pertinent to sculpture where the dynamic force-line can bring life to the static line of a muscle. In that line of muscle, however, the straight line will predominate because it is the only one that matches the inner simplicity of the synthesis we counterpose to the outward baroque effect that results from analysis.

But the straight line will not induce us to imitate the Egyptians, primitives, and savages, as an occasional modern sculptor has done in a desperate attempt to free himself from the Greeks. Our straight line will be alive and palpitating, will lend itself to all the necessities of the infinite expressions of matter, and its fundamental naked severity will symbolize the severity of steel in the lines of modern machinery.

We can, to end with, affirm that in sculpture the artist should not shrink from any or every means that might help achieve a *reality.* No fear is more stupid than that which makes us afraid of straying even ever so little from the strict confines of the art we practice. There is no such thing as painting, as sculpture, as music, as poetry: There is only creation! And so if a sculptural composition suggests the need for a special rhythmic movement that might reinforce or contrast with the rhythm fixed within the *sculptural whole* (something indispensable in any work of art), one can attach to it some sort of contrivance that could impart an appropriate rhythmic movement to the planes or lines.

We should not forget that the pendulum and rotating spheres in a clock, that the movement of a piston in and out of a cylinder, that the meshing and unmeshing of two cogwheels with the continuous appearing and disappearing of their little steel rectangles, that the fury of a flywheel, or the whirling of a propeller are all plastic and pictorial elements that a Futurist work of sculpture should exploit to the full. The opening and closing of a valve creates a rhythm no less beautiful but infinitely newer than that of an animal's eyelid!

Conclusions:

1. To proclaim that sculpture aims at the abstract reconstruction of planes and volumes that determine forms and not at what they may be meant to represent figuratively

2. To abolish in sculpture, as in every other art, the traditional "sublimity" of the subject matter

3. To deny that sculpture should in any way aim at reconstructing real-life episodes, while affirming instead the absolute necessity of utilizing any and every element of reality itself as means to return to the essential factors that account for plastic sensibility. Thus, by thinking of bodies and their parts as *plastic zones*, we will introduce into a Futurist sculptural composition planes made of wood or metal, immobile or set into motion mechanically, as means of characterizing an object: hairy spherical forms to stand for heads of hair; semicircles of glass for a vase; iron wires and netting for an atmospheric plane; etc., etc.

4. To destroy the merely literary and traditional "nobility" attributed to marble and bronze. To deny that a single material has to suffice for the entire construction of a sculptural ensemble. To assert that even twenty different materials can be used together in a single work where the purpose is to arouse plastic emotion. We enumerate a few of these: glass, wood, cardboard, iron, cement, horsehair, leather, cloth, mirrors, electric lights, etc., etc.

5. To proclaim that in the intersection of the planes of a book with the corners of a table, in the straight lines of a match, in a window frame, there is more truth than in all the tangles of muscles, in all the full breasts and bulging buttocks of the heroes or Venuses that inspire our present-day sculptural idiocy

6. That it is only out of an utterly modern choice of subjects that we can arrive at the discovery of new *plastic ideas*

7. That the straight line is the only means that can lead to the primitive virginity of a new architectonic structuring of sculptural masses or zones

8. That no renewal can be looked for except through the *sculpture of environment*, because that is the only approach through which sculpture will develop, prolonging itself into space so as to shape and model space itself. Which means that, from today on, even clay can be used to *model the atmosphere* that surrounds all things

9. The thing as we create it is nothing less than the bridge between the *external plastic infinite* and the *internal plastic infinite*, and so objects never come to an end in themselves but intersect with infinite combinations arising out of either attraction or collisions

10. The urgent task is to destroy the systematic recourse to the nude, the traditional concept of the statue and the monument!

11. And therefore we must refuse, courageously, any and every commission, no matter how lucrative, which does not by its nature involve a pure construction of sculptural elements that have been completely rethought and renewed.

UMBERTO BOCCIONI
Painter and sculptor

WHAT DIVIDES US FROM CUBISM

Umberto Boccioni

The confusion between *Futurism* and *Cubism* that newspaper critics persist in making, more from ignorance than ill will, impels me to clarify and emphasize certain differences that set us apart from the Cubists.

It is useless to repeat here what I have written in articles and said in lectures about the esteem we hold for our friends in France, apart from the occasional incompetents. I shall speak about their fundamental error according to us Futurists: It is a species of inherent flaw, in spite of which they have been placed in the avant-garde of European painting until today.

I am using the name *Cubism* to make it understood that I am referring to the group that most assiduously exhibits and campaigns under that name for a more abstract painting, for a new pictorial construction in systematic and violent reaction against Impressionism. Actually, the name Cubism does not cover a well-defined tendency. It started with a light remark by Matisse that has become famous because it was understood to say what it did not mean to say, and today, three years later, the group is falling apart and becoming transformed. Around the Cubists there are other young painters who already represent a step forward and are preparing more advanced and more profound works that are completely different, the opposite of what the Cubist school really should be turning out.

Before taking up Cubism, however, I must speak of Pablo Picasso, without stopping to analyze and discuss the priority of the Cubist discoveries and the more or less explainable divergences between him and the Cubists.

Picasso represents the farthest point in the Impressionist renewal. And like all evolutionary extremes, it is already offering its own negation, though a negation that does not manage to organize itself. We see in this artist the assertion of plastic values that was initiated by Cézanne carried to its furthest possibility. In his latest works the study of form leads him increasingly toward a fundamental concept based on the objective knowledge of reality. Once the first surprise has passed, however, one realizes that this formal concept is the result of an impassive scientific calibration that destroys all dynamic heat, all violence, and all incidental variety in the forms. But precisely this dynamic heat, violence, and incidental variety make the forms have a life outside of intelligence and project them into the infinite. And this is the result of creative emotion, delirious sensation, intuition.

The scientific calibration I speak of functions by way of a *rotating* point of view that makes the artist an analyzer of fixity, an intellectual impressionist of pure form. Picasso in fact copies the object in its formal complexity, taking it apart and numbering its aspects. In doing so, he creates for himself an incapacity to experience it *in its action*. And he could not do so because his procedure, the enumeration I spoke of, arrests the life of the object (motion), separates out the elements that constitute it, and redistributes them in the picture according to an *accidental* harmony inherent in the object. But the analysis of an object is always made at the expense of the object: that is, by *killing* it. Consequently, what are extracted are dead elements with which no one could ever succeed in *composing a living thing*. However much talk goes on about a living arabesque and the abstract individuality of any and every composition as a pure emotive ensemble of planes, volumes, and lines, we Futurists proclaim that painting marches toward a comprehension of the object

that is more synthesized and more significant.

Picasso, we see, by putting a stop to the life in the object kills the *emotion*. The Impressionists did much the same with light. They killed it by decomposing it into its elements of the spectrum. These phenomena of scientific analysis are necessary in regenerating art, but they should then be left behind.

A painting by Picasso lacks laws, lacks lyricism, lacks personal will. It presents, unfolds, throws into confusion, splits into facets, multiplies to infinity the object's details. The sectioning of the object and the fantastic variety of aspects a violin, a guitar, a glass can assume in his picture astonish us, just like the scientific enumeration of the components of an object that, out of ignorance or by tradition, we had thought of until now as a unified whole. This was a fateful discovery, one necessary to art. It is the valuable outcome of a refined work but is not yet emotion or, at least, is only one aspect of emotion. It is the scientific analysis that studies life in a cadaver, that dissects muscles, arteries, veins to study their functions and discover the laws of creation. But art is already creation in itself and has no wish to accumulate knowledge. Emotion in art calls for drama. Emotion in modern painting and sculpture sings of the gravitation, the displacement, the reciprocal attraction of forms, masses, and colors: which means *movement*, and that is the interpretation of forces. To fix beforehand as its sole end the integral analysis of volumes and physical bodies is a dead stop. To continue so, is to deliberately create against nature. It is to conceive the object anew in an immutable absolute, by now destroyed and banished from our conception of life. I repeat what I said in the preceding chapter, because this is the key of the *Dynamism* we Italian Futurists have created. Today our mental evolution no longer permits us to view an individual or an object isolated from its surroundings. In painting and sculpture the object does not live out its essential reality except as the plastic resultant between object and environment. Picasso has set out to observe and relate various sides of the object and dispose them on the canvas in such a way that the forms of the object-environment do participate in it only as chance surrounding elements. Toward that end he invented a schematic system in which the notions that form its framework are veiled with the utmost pains in mystery, and this because they take the bloom off the frontiers of art. But they remain nothing but notions and therefore are outside of art, and consequently outside of emotion.

To avoid, as he has, the study of the relations, of the forces between object and object, means to lose the synthesis and motion, thus limiting inspiration. The fact is, his picture is always the enumeration of the aspects of a central object, annotated by the various aspects of the surrounding setting—a decidedly traditional conception, the rotating point of view notwithstanding.

The object and setting are not viewed as a new unity of forces that are contradictory and in evolution. Moreover it is impossible to put life into two objects, that is, to bring out the action of their reciprocal influences, by analyzing one by one the parts that compose them. This higher analysis is a stylization of the analytic approach in the northern countries. Its result is analogous, in terms of emotion, to that of the old pictures consisting of portrait-figures. The objective psychological analysis of those figures killed the *unity*, the *fervor*, the *action*, which are the fundamental bases of creation in an art work. The picture consequently remained negative. The increased fixity that comes from analysis makes Picasso lose that sense of volume which was one of Cézanne's chief aims. Intense analysis of volume has led him, in one work to the next, to an abbreviated representation of bodies. He has ended by giving the sign, the indication, of a form. Instead of volume he gives the equivalent formula. And thus, given the transparency and malleability of those forms, or schemata of forms, it becomes possible to multiply them to infinity. Whence Picasso's characteristic, the extremely intricate arabesque.

One thing is certain: Volume understood as some of the Cubists did leads to monumentality, that is, to the *grandiose* art of the past, to Michelangelo, Raphael, Poussin, David, Ingres, etc.; and Picasso himself hates *la grande machine*, as he himself told me, and scorns it when produced by Cubists. He is both wrong and right. Right because if one has to fall back on the old way of composing images it is better *to limit oneself* to making form for itself alone. He is wrong because it is inevitable that, with elements of form and color rendered more abstract than in the old painters, the artist should seek to construct a more abstract drama than in the past. Indeed I would go so far as to say that form and color can take on life only on condition of defining themselves in drama—in the creative *state of mind*.

To be born, to grow, to die: There is the fatalism that guides us. Not to march toward the definitive is to refuse one's share in evolution, in death. Everything moves toward catastrophe! And one must have the courage to surpass oneself until death; and enthusiasm, fervor, intensity, and ecstasy are all aspirations toward perfection, that is, the ultimate consummation. We must make an end with negations, with the terror of realizations. And we must not forget that the Futurist revolution is leading art toward a new, great, definitive epoch, or, as the others put it, the classical. . . .

And for that reason we Futurists champion the picture, thence composition and the rules, and thence order and scale in the plastic values. But for us the picture is not the same as what we shall examine of the Cubists: It is not Picasso's or Braque's analytical enumeration, but is life itself intuited in its transformations *within* the object, not outside it.

We are in agreement with Picasso when he wishes to destroy painting as such, because we also have been working in Italy for several years (first isolated, then united in Futurist solidarity) to destroy all the old pictorial, idiotic, traditional, realistic, decorative, smoke-blackened museum stuff; but he deeply errs when he fails to recognize that devising abstract elements does not lead to an *abstract construction*. Such construction is what has made us proclaim since the First Manifesto the subject in art as a necessity, and it is this construction which gives our Futurist painting a profoundly Italian character.

If therefore we have in Picasso a force striving to escape from everything conventional in art (and aided in this by thirty years and more of French painting), the Cubists on the contrary plunge back into it. If in the former we find abstraction carried to the point of aridity, a quality native to the Spanish breed to which he belongs (the Spaniards have always been, in the past, the most stylized analysts), what we Futurists—true, serene, and well-balanced Italians—find in the Cubists is frigid, French, academic good taste.

And in fact the Cubists and their critical champions are forever appealing to this French tradition.

Can one speak of a French tradition? Can one speak of it in connection with the Cubists who aspire to create something universally typical and seek it by going back and reattaching themselves to the French tradition? France, pictorially speaking, has never shown any realization of an agreed-on conventional ideal. It has always fluctuated between Flemish art, of which it is a Latinizing branch, and the authentically Latin art of Italy.

When we say Greek sculpture or Italian painting or Flemish painting our mind immediately

understands these in terms of homogeneous cycles, historical continuities in a people's artistic expression. But what do we think of when we say German painting? Of embalmed monsters realized by sour-tempered creators. What do we think of when we say Spanish painting? Of some painter or of some portrait. . . . What do we think of when we say French painting? Of *partial studies of reality* that follow one another from Fouquet to the Impressionists and represent the traditional traits of the French people, and that struggle desperately against *attempts at style entirely inspired by the general culture*, which unfortunately always win out in France. I therefore call tradition in art the logical, inevitable, continuous development of a people's capacity to form and hold to ideals beyond any returns to, or sympathies with, or influences from, foreign schools or fashions.

What can be said to be truly great in French painting and sculpture has always been a Gothic tempered with sobriety and lightened by elegance. Even the Impressionists with their example of collective genius (*in collaboration*) have borne out the Gothic tradition in one of its chief traits: Impressionism is, pictorially speaking, the cathedral of modernity.

From this Gothic basis can there arise, remaining French, a universal style? We Italian Futurists say no. A style universal not only for Europe but for all men of the Western world cannot flower again except in Italy. At the close of the fourteenth century and in the first years of the fifteenth Gothic art was at its zenith, but its realistic poetry had to emigrate to Italy to find an outlet in the ocean of Michelangelo. We may well consider whether we are not observing again today in Cubism the same congealing, the same weary, dried-up, complicated mannerism that characterized the fading of Gothic art in the fifteenth century.

French painting, we see, has been either veristic and naturalistic or coldly academic and Italianizing: As a whole it has always had a characteristic tendency to become pretty to the point of sweetness.

And when in the nineteenth century it freed itself from the cold and sterile Greco-Raphaelesque influences and tried through the logical richness of realism to rise to the solemn, the grandiose, the terrible (Romanticism), it almost always betrayed what every good Frenchman calls within himself *la tradition française*.

Much as he is to be admired, Poussin is no genius. He is presumed by some to have started what the French call national art, or *goût français*. But even on this point the Cubists disagree among themselves. Here however it would be better to understand each other: If French art means academic good taste, conventional elegance, harmony according to rules, Poussin did found the tradition and Lorrain would continue it and David, preceded by his teacher Vien and followed by Ingres, the most rigid of the Greco-bourgeois. But everyone aware of the problem of painting understands that their works are not stages in the artistic ideals of the French people but beautiful constructions to meet worldly demands. They are not solutions in continuity but academic reactions, palace revolutions in the great palace of Culture, while they hardly speak at all of what is outside, in nature. Look at architecture: the same story. France arranges, with that elegance inherited from the Gothic and Romanesque, but it never makes an original and profound synthesis of the two forces, Versailles and its pavilions, Le Nôtre and his gardens: Don't they seem like the miracles of a dressmaker of genius, of a great embroiderer! It is always an art of adornment. It is always the worldly spirit that wins, the cultivated spirit. It is the effort to renovate the decorative splendors of the past. Rarely does their eye observe nature and extract a rhythm from it and a vigorous formula. Whenever the great French artists have produced a sincere work in painting or sculpture, it is gentle, timid, almost plastically labored, though often elegant. This is characteristic of the truly French painters, which means realistic and anti-Italian, until the nineteenth century, when with the Barbizon painters and the Impressionists we enter a period that marks the apogee of French painting.

Let us not forget however that before that period French painters were great according to what, for me, is *not* the French tradition, but for the more they had distilled from Greece, Rome, Pompeii, and Raphael. Michelangelo was little understood or translated into French. He was already too grim, too passionately abstract, and his influence would be found in Daumier, Delacroix, and Millet, temperaments that are not very French if those of Poussin and David represent the French tradition. Looking back, even for anyone with a moderate knowledge of French painting and art, Cousin can seem only a mediocre artist hardly of even documentary importance; Vouet an entirely mediocre Baroque, the triumphant heir of all the Italian decadence of the Carracci, etc.; Le Sueur, Le Brun, Mignard, Rigaud, and Largillière are hollow, cold, affected academics. Claude Lorrain glimpsed the future in light, but Italianizing classicism diminishes him, makes him antipathetic.



Umberto Boccioni, ca. 1912, from the archive of the journal *Der Sturm*. Photo: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung, Berlin (West)

Poussin and then David and then Ingres each in his time aspired to the ideal, to the definitive, but without success, preoccupied solely with Greece and Rome. They understood the abstract, the grandiose, the definitive—in short, style—only from the point of view of the ancients, Greek and Roman foreigners.

The French character and methods of investigation did not exist for their temperament steeped in classical culture; at the most they paid homage to the naturalistic and imitative basis of the French with an odd succession of portraits that remained colored translations into French of Greco-Roman marbles and plaster casts. These were unfruitful works, strictly personal, with no subsequent development by other artists since they were studied more from art than from nature in their inspiration as in their style.

Froment, Fouquet, Clouet, Philippe de Champaigne, Callot, the Le Nain brothers, Watteau, Fragonard, and Chardin should be taken as marking the straight line of French realism; they are indeed the authentic French tradition, but they followed one another at too great distances and were disregarded by their own peo-

ple, unaware of themselves, half-Flemish, unequal in achievement, too limited and dependent on chance. They follow one another according to their temperament more than for logical continuity of development, all being timid and isolated.

Here something I had not thought of before comes to mind. In Paris when I gave my talk in French on "Futurist Painting and Sculpture" in the large hall on rue de La Boëtie where my first exhibition of sculpture opened, I remember that in the middle of the uproar and the noisy crossfire of invectives, while I was analyzing French painting and bringing out what seemed to me the Cubists' gifts, a gentleman shouted or, rather, howled: "*Monsieur! les cubistes ne sont pas français!*" ["Sir, the Cubists aren't Frenchmen!"]. The riot that followed, and the fistfight that broke out between that gentleman and numerous Cubists kept me from reflecting on what seemed a mere interruption, an ironic aside. Thinking back on it, I now ask myself if the gentleman was not perhaps right.... I don't say that our Cubist friends are not French: But I wonder if the character of their tendency does not revive yet again a historical phenomenon frequent in France. Every time—to limit myself to painting—French naturalism initiates a period, a development, that shows signs of leading to a definitive break in the continuity, that is, of finding a way out by means of a definitive universal formula, elements of foreign sensibility are immediately superimposed that, not being assimilable by the populace, confuse, deviate, or block the pure natural course of the French spring, the Celtic. Serene, gentle, and orderly naturalism gives way to a cold intellectual complication.

Between the equally irresolute Gothic-veristic and Latin-idealistic tendencies, France arrived at the beautiful, grand, and logical flowering that filled the entire nineteenth century. In that century we see a Romanticism (which is a realism on an idealistic base) triumphing with Gros, Géricault, and Delacroix over the Raphaelesque Greekeries of David and Ingres. We see another Romanticism manifesting itself in Corot, a realist veiled in classical nostalgia, and another in Millet, an idyllic realist, unpolished and humble. Then follow all the more or less veristic efforts of the Fontainebleau landscapists; with this period, which had not yet successfully extricated itself from classical Italian, Flemish, Dutch, and English influences, we come ever closer to the great Impressionist revolution. France owes to Gustave Courbet and Edouard Manet the blows struck for a radical transformation that would leave no doubts of the existence of old-master influences—at least as an object of reaction. But even these artists, who seemed so terrible to their contemporaries, were not immune from influence of the museum, whether classical or Spanish. . . .When one thinks of the terror of artists before the audacious and the arbitrary!...

Impressionism, the ultimate evolution of a naturalism centuries old, was also the first page of the poem that must sing of the forces of matter beyond the accidental and the episodic.

The Impressionist motif (as a basis for composition) is nothing less than the first step toward the creation of a plastic organism constructed out of the pure lyrical interplay (of masses, lines, and lights) between object and setting. It has become, let us not forget, the single word with which we express today—regardless of what is said about it—the European artistic sensibility. Impressionism is therefore a plastic lyricism that indicates the way toward the final reproducing of the image merely to give back that image. It points toward creating the *plastic fact*, toward creating what only we Italian Futurists have proclaimed and produced: the *style of sensation*, the *impression eternalized*, and *dynamism*. With Impressionism it seemed that French painting might find at last that break with continuity, that opening into a definitive universal formula I spoke about above. The contrary occurred. With Cézanne's investigations of volume and statics, of weight, tone, and the rest—correct in principle and erroneous in their consequences—and with Cubism and its a priori concepts which are the systematic and logical outgrowth of Cézanne's pictures—note this well!—not of his ideas, the French academic tradition once again came to the foreground.

As I said at the start, what I consider Cubism to be is an attempt to give *style* to all the truths of form and color renovated from the Impressionists forward. But a style is not something brought about by wishing or by culture, that is, by knowing what was style in other times. Style is born and develops spontaneously out of the profound will of a people and on the bases of their fundamental and characteristic sensibility.

One cannot find, as the Cubists' theory will have it, anything fixed, a priori, and definitive that corresponds to the spirit of our modernity. The elements we make use of are still few and uncertain. It is harmful and false to turn to the old artists or to base oneself on them so as to give one's own work the serene and universal character of the definitive realization. We will find the definitive by proceeding to the interpretation of the *relations of motion of the objects*. Thus, instead of fixing limits to objects, as artists did before Impressionism, the objects must be interpreted in their reciprocal formal influences, in the gravitation of the masses, in the direction of the forces. The Cubists construct a definitive by interpreting Cézanne's teachings in a negative sense.

[Footnote by Boccioni: On the subject of influence from elements of foreign sensibility, it should be noted that Cézanne's teaching is entirely old Italian and that the two Cubists Gleizes and Metzinger in their book *Du Cubisme* conclude one chapter by saying that the Cubists' means demonstrate, if studied attentively, that they have *leurs lettres de noblesse* in Michelangelo. One day in Paris Monsieur Vollard told me he intended some time or other to demonstrate that Cézanne is of Italian origin and that the name Cézanne is a degenerate form of Cesena.... This means nothing to me.]

Interpreted thus, Cézanne becomes the source of a definitive position which is a dead stop, if not a step backward. There was in Cézanne the danger found in all intellectual artists: a gap open to tradition. In Cézanne we have continual classical overtures of the museum. Seduced by this, the Cubists have exaggerated Cézanne's famous advice to return to the cube, the sphere, the cylinder. They have taken literally Cézanne's idea: "Il faut faire le musée devant la nature," and thus have forgotten nature and turned out museum pieces. They have exaggerated Cézanne's coloring and, despising Impressionist chromaticism, have emphasized pure chiaroscuro, seasoning it with French grays and cold tones worthy of Giraudet [sic], Prud'hon, and Ingres. And exaggerating their terror of the episodic [as subject matter] they have generalized forms and fallen into an external generalization from outside themselves, lacking all vitality. Following the French academic tradition, they have wished to rise to the concept within the form, forgetting that this concept must arise as a purification of naturalistic objectivity and not be a process of imitating or of an affinity with the old masters.

For this reason the quest for a definitive solution that would close the parabola of modern art does not interest us Italians. Let the Cubists who declare themselves heirs of Poussin close off the parabola of a national tradition, or those who declare themselves heirs of Clouet and of all French naturalism. We Italian Futurists have no tradition to be closed off or continued. The paganism expressed in the human type is a thing of the past, dead with Michelangelo. It no longer interests us, and we feel

ourselves completely cut off from it. The definitive form in the classical sense, whether Greek or old-master Italian, is completely unknown to the Futurists. *We modern Italians are without a past.* Perhaps the French can believe they are carrying on from one of their great primitives. It is understandable. The natural line of the French Primitives breaks with the *Italianism* of Louis XIV. The return to nature—however precious and powdered—on the part of Watteau and Fragonard, as well as Chardin's more humble and sincere and more profound pictorialism, was halted and detoured, faced with Winckelmann and Raffaele Mengs. Cézanne but above all the Cubists again interrupt with a new intellectualism, cerebral and traditional, the work of Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir. . . Perhaps inevitably. . .

In Italy on the other hand, from the Primitives and Cimabue to Michelangelo, the Venetians, Caravaggio, Bernini, and Tiepolo we can follow a development that is close, ineluctable, and undisturbed within which the artists always succeed one another from one exploration to the next, each artist complete, masterful, and definitive. Canova has no place in the history of Italian sensibility. The triumphal entry that our newest Italian painting has made into European sensibility with the Futurist painters gives the greatest hopes for the future.



Boccioni's mother in front of *Horse + Houses* (*Cavallo + case;* Fondazione Peggy Guggenheim, Venice), ca. 1914. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

From the death of Michelangelo until today, artistic Europe has sought out and accumulated the elements for a type of *newness* that only we Italians can express. We Futurists are the sole *primitives of a new sensibility, completely transformed.*

Thus the Cubists are not offering a completely new interpretation of this matter, that is, beyond conceiving it in the sum total of its dimensions and in the determinism of the organic qualities of its forces. They stop short with the question of how to construct a picture, how to compose it, how to distribute the masses and colors in it. They turn upside down the elements of the traditional picture and find new rhythms for the new combination of a line and a curve. But that is not all. What we are getting from them is still only a new way of arranging the surface, not a new and abstract interpretation of pictorial depth. Some Cubists seem concerned only with the search for a new law of frontality that can serve—as Longhi said in a magnificent article on Futurist painting—to "increase the surface of an object that can be plastically realized" (*La Voce*, no. 15, April 10, 1913).

But this is not enough to construct a living figure, much less a picture. And because all the Cubists make use more or less of Picasso's elements, plainly they are committing the mistake of believing that with pieces of anatomy a living person can be put together. A figure or a picture cannot be made to live in any other way than by *living* them, and Picasso, when he dissects a figure, slices it into bits and pieces, breaks it down into its elements, kills it. And when the Cubists construct with these elements, they make a dead creature, embalmed.

Moreover the Cubist picture is impregnated with the atmosphere of a museum, which comes to them—I will never tire of saying so—from Cézanne and from a mistaken feeling for a hasty conciliation between revolution and tradition. The study and consequent influences of the archaic antique, Negro art, wooden sculpture, the Byzantines, and so on, have saturated the pictures of our young friends in France with an archaism that is one more outdated disaster, another cultural phenomenon like the Greco-Roman influences. If those influences from rudimentary arts have become accepted for their novelty, if they have served to liberate us from the classical, they are also harmful to the development of a pure, modern, plastic consciousness. It is in this sense that we declare ourselves Primitives. Not one of us Futurists, whether painter or sculptor, is affected by that archaism which always entails the hieratic immobility of solemn antique stamp that repels us. I repeat again: There is a *barbarism* in modern life that inspires us. Thus we have no wish to reproduce the movement of the crowds and the episodes that take place under our nose. We desire to seek out within the unconscious necessities of life, in the way they manifest themselves, the laws for a new—*completely new*!—artistic consciousness. To us Futurists it is not interesting to know whether the Cubists are changing, whether today one is working in Dynamism and another in Orphism, whether one of them is talking about modern life, about complementarity or about simultaneity, and with an infantile and desperate overinsistence. . . . We know the Cubism we were compared with in France, in articles and books, when our *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting* came out (April 11, 1910) and our first exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune was held (February 6, 1912). In the manifesto and in the exhibition catalogue we were the first to speak of *dynamism*, of *modern life*, of *complementarity* in form and color. At that time there was laughter and ferocious criticism. Many of those things are now being taken up in Paris, in Germany, in Russia, in Japan. Newspapers, letters, reviews, and books are proof of it. In-

numerable young people from abroad send us photographs of their pictures. This satisfies our pride as Italians and shows that we were right.

When we spoke about subject in a picture, foreseeing and realizing the trend now accepted everywhere, our idea was interpreted as a desire to return to the anecdotal. . . . How could we have thought that, we who—perhaps better and earlier than everyone—could see that the Impressionist *motif* was the beginning of the destruction of the scene with images? We wanted to proclaim and make it understood, amid the ferociously objective tendencies that dominated in France a few years ago, that there is no possibility of rising to a definitive in forms and colors except through *emotion*. It is emotion that sets the measure, curbs analysis, legitimizes the arbitrary, and creates dynamism. Emotion and subject are synonymous.

It was the motion of the object that interested us! In its lyrical interpretation (emotion) consists the just means, the fulcrum on which to center the representation of reality without its life being choked, or falling into didactics or the chaos of higher analysis.

To sum up, we Futurists hereby deny that Cubism created an abstract system of ciphers, a kind of artistic conceptualism which, by setting up predetermined types, can substitute in practice for the artist's intuition. To pass on to the *concept* in art, as the Cubists wish to do when the identity of outward and inward reality is lacking in us, is very dangerous, as proved by the frigid fabrication of images practiced by certain Cubists.

What should not be forgotten is this: The point of view is completely altered with Futurist dynamism. However inward-turning modern painting has been until now, it has always unrolled a spectacle of successive images before us. Although the Cubists may conceive the object in its integral value, and the picture may be constituted of the harmonious combination of one or more object complexes within an environment complex, the spectacle does not change.

For our part, what we wish to give is the object seen in its *dynamic becoming*, that is, to give a synthesis of the transformations the object undergoes in its two motions, relative and absolute.

We wish to give the style of the movement. We do not wish to observe, dissect, and transfer into images: We identify ourselves with the thing itself—which is something profoundly different. For us therefore the object has no a priori form, and only the line is definable, marking the relationship between its weight (quantity) and its expansion (quality).

This suggests to us the lines of force that characterize the object's potentiality and lead us to a new unity which is the essential interpretation of the object, that is, the intuitive perception of life. Ours is a *quest after the definitive within the succession of states of intuition.*

We, who are accused of seeing things outwardly, of cinematography, are the only ones working our way toward a definitive which is an intuitive evolving creation.

And thus we can say we are at the antipodes of Cubism. The Cubists arrive at a generalization by reducing the object to a geometrical idea—cube, cone, sphere, cylinder (Cézanne)—and this has its basis in reason. We arrive at our generalization by rendering *the style of the impression*, that is, by creating a unique dynamic form that will be the synthesis of the universal dynamism, perceived through the object's motion. This conception which creates form as the continuity in space has its basis in *sensation*.

Cubism has destroyed the Impressionist fluidity, but has turned back to a permanently static conception of reality.

We say that contour and line do not exist if they are thought of as fixed by the delimitation of the planes they include. This is a true return to the old principles. Lines and contours exist as forces spurting from the dynamic action of physical bodies. They are therefore vectors of plastic forces (force-lines) that fluctuate between the concrete structure of the real (intelligence) and its variable, infinite, and mobile action (intuition).

The Cubist theory constrains the object into an ideography a priori; we participate in the formula of its evolution. Cubism repeats the stylistic process of the Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Leonardo da Vinci; we courageously enter into the conception of a truly new evolutive style. We approach the definitive by giving style to the secular naturalism the North developed; they fall headlong into all the conceptions of style that, through the millennia have created the ACADEMY. They interrupt and turn their backs on the evolution of the modern pictorial sensibility that the great art of Impressionism has given us; we carry it further. We open a new way; they close off another.

Therefore we do not extract haphazard plastic ideas from a thing, as Picasso does. We have no fixed concepts over and beyond the thing itself, as the Cubists do. We Futurists place ourselves within the thing and experience the evolutive concept in it.

To refuse an a priori reality according to the old traditional laws of statics: This is the abyss that divides us from Cubism and puts us Futurists at the furthermost point in world art.

FUTURIST ARCHITECTURE: A MANIFESTO (ca. 1913–14)

Umberto Boccioni

We have kicked out the commercial and traditional apathy of the Italian painters and sculptors, and now it is time to turn our lash on the speculations and cowardice of our architects.

Architecture—the liberal art par excellence, the vastest in aspiration toward the absolute—is, alas, both the most slavish and the most tied to life's contingencies.

We Futurists have summed up in the last four years the pictorial and sculptural researches of a modernism completely unknown in Italy until now. We have created as in a spiral simultaneity, with form unitary and dynamic, which creates architectural construction in continuity:

PLASTIC DYNAMISM = ARCHITECTONIC DYNAMIC AWARENESS

The conditions of Italian architecture until now are particularly unfavorable. The political and social conditions, the traditional concept of education and hygiene, are historical barriers difficult for the architect to overcome by his personal resolve and the isolated thrust of his own genius. This is why we Futurists are eager to bring the Italian architects into the atmosphere of courage, of rigorous aesthetic solidarity, that we have created.

In architectural creation the past weighs heavily on the minds of patron and architect. Every sausage-maker dreams of the Renaissance or

something like it, not to speak of the monumental asininity of the State. Contact with businessmen saps the architect's audacity. Plagiarism, that bane of Italian art, brings with it two shameful servitudes that paralyze the development of an Italian architectural art:

1. Servitude to the ancient orders and styles: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Moorish, and so on.
2. Servitude to foreign styles: sentimentality + Quakerism = Cottage or English art; barmaid sensuality + pseudo-gypsy = Beer Hall or Viennese art; effete barbarism + literary muzhikism = Isba or Russian art; cow's milk + chocolate + Alpine ennui = Swiss Chalet or Rustic art.

In the servitude to ancient styles we have stale and vulgar archaeological habits that give rise to the building-trades fetishism for the Greek, the Roman, the basilica, the Gothic cathedral, the Cinquecento palace.

In the servitude to foreign styles—if they can be called that—we have instead that intellectual snobbism for the North, which has cluttered up the Italian house with decorations of woods, cloths, objects, all worked with the stupid taste of the peasant from sundry Hungarian, Russian, or Scandinavian steppes, that seeks to ornament our public places, theaters, cafés, banks, and exhibition halls with the funereal black marbles and glacial sculptures in black wood of a Berlin restaurant or with the heavy vivacity of Muscovite orientalism.

It is time to stop this. The only country which in its climate and its spirit can produce a modern architecture of universal style is Italy. That is its future function in the arts. In fifty years Italy will have produced great artists in painting, sculpture, literature, music, and architecture who will have brought in laws for the world.

The only way to a radical renewal in architecture is the return to **Necessity**.

When I wrote that the formula of plastic dynamism included the *idealism* of our epoch, I meant that it included in itself the *necessity* of our epoch. In modern life

NECESSITY = VELOCITY

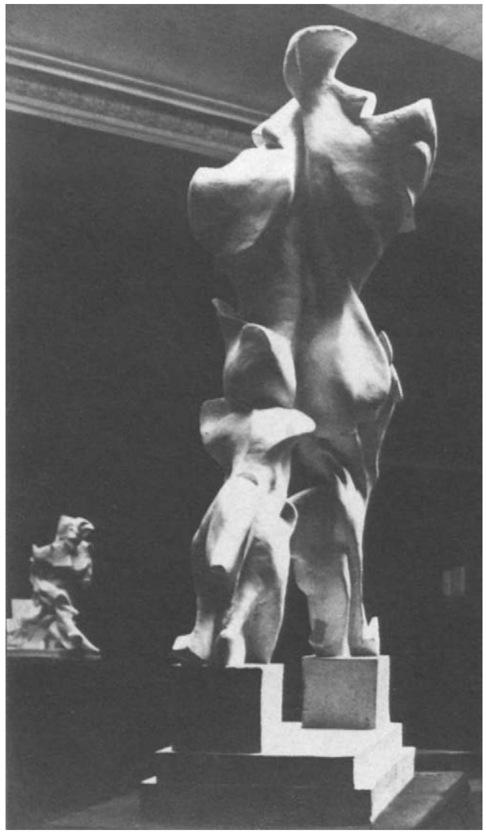
Our works of painting and sculpture are calculated to make emotion spring from an inner (architectonic) construction and flee from visual accidents. Since volumes of forms, atmospheric volumes, voids and solids, and their definition demand mathematics, clarity, precision of contours, and decisive tones, the bareness, rawness, and black-and-whiteness of our works live by virtue of architectonic laws dictated by harmonic laws.

The dynamic necessity of modern life will necessarily create an evolving architecture. This concept has already been applied to all the buildings that respond directly to the necessities of life, which because of their function are thought to lie outside the aesthetic domain but instead are exactly those buildings that create, through their origins in necessity, a truly vital aesthetic emotion.

A surgical instrument, a ship, a machine, a railroad station all answer in their construction to a living necessity that creates an ensemble of voids and solids, of lines and planes, of balances and equations through which arises a new, architectonic emotion.

No naval engineer or machine inventor would ever consider sacrificing even a minimal share of the efficiency of their construction to accommodate a decoration or any such aesthetic or cultural concern. Indeed we see the opposite in the magnificent development of mechanics. Ships, automobiles, railroad stations have taken on more aesthetic *expressiveness* as they have subordinated their architectonic construction to what was necessary for their intended functions. The huge roofs of railroad stations, distantly related to the grandiosity of a cathedral nave, are being replaced by shed roofs, sufficient for the needs of arriving and departing trains. The masts and tall smokestacks that linked the look of a ship with that of a flowering plant, that is, to nature's irregularity, have vanished to make place for necessary ensemble: sharp-cut, flat, ellipsoidal, and penetrating, designed to avoid friction. Automobiles have reduced the dimensions that linked them with carriages and stage coaches, so as to make the motor ride lower to the ground and sail forward like flying machines. In time we will see airplanes that no longer imitate birds and fish and increasingly take on forms dictated by the necessities of stability and speed.

These profoundly instructive procedures that the mechanical realm offers us are totally ignored in the builder's art, in dwellings, streets, and so forth. While forms of life and art are moving away from the chaotic disorder of nature toward the cerebral, the aesthetic preoccupation, the culture itself, impedes all innovation. People have a sacred concept in the column, the capital, and the cornice; a sacred concept of materials, marble, bronze, or wood; a sacred concept of decoration. A sacred concept of the monumental; a sacred concept of the eternal laws of statics.



Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (*Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*), 1913. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

The architect must toss out all of this and forget he is an architect, returning to a new basis that is not Egyptian archaism or peasant primitivism, but builds for the conditions of life, created by science, that are imposed on us as *pure necessity*. It is this that guides the instinct infallibly toward aesthetic expression. The large apartment buildings for the people, in their nudity and their simple decoration in solid white and empty black, are much closer to reality than the country villa or city house.

In my book on Futurist painting and sculpture I spoke of the new natural elements that science and mechanics have given us; these elements, which we live among, are the essence of modern life. In those natural elements must be sought the new laws for architectural constructions.

One cannot speak of statics and eternity when every day the fever rises for remodeling, for speed of communications, for quicker construction. All of this shows us that in architecture we have turned toward an art more rigid, light, and mobile.

There will never be progress so long as we persist in the traditional servitude to building materials that seem to our modern sense of speed so heavy, cumbersome, slow to work with, and therefore expensive. We must dignify building materials quick to work with (iron, wood, brick, reinforced concrete), keeping their special characteristics in evidence. These materials, used in a construction with the pure and simple concept of **economy + utility + rapidity**, create elegant contrasts of tone and color. A girder weatherproofed with red lead can be painted with all its rivets in the spectrum of colors. The rivets create decorative spaces. The combination of red brick with white cement creates a decorative shading. It is therefore a stupid error to conceal the construction of such materials, masking and cheating them with whitewash, stuccos, fake marbles, and other such expensive and useless vulgarisms.

In painting and sculpture we suppressed all decorative superfluity, all aesthetic preoccupation with monumentality and traditional solemnity.

The cube, the pyramid, and the rectangle must be ruled out as basic building shapes: They lock the architectural line into immobility. All types of lines should be put to use at any point and with any means. This autonomy of the component parts of the edifice will break up the uniformity and create an architectonic impressionism, and from this can come the rise of new possibilities. Meanwhile we will have destroyed the old and useless *symmetry* for which utility is always being sacrificed. The rooms in a building should give, like a motor, the maximum efficiency. Indeed, merely for symmetry light and space are allotted to rooms that do not need them, while it is sacrificed in others where it is most necessary to modern living.

Likewise the façade of a house also should descend, rise, be broken up, recede, or project according to the degree of necessity of the rooms that compose it. It is the exterior that the architect should sacrifice to the interior, just as in painting and sculpture. And because an exterior is always a traditional exterior, the new exterior that will result from the triumph of the interior will create a new line of architecture.

We have said that in painting our aim is to place the viewer in the center of the picture, thereby putting him at the center of the emotion rather than leaving him a mere onlooker. In similar fashion the architectural environment of cities is changing in an enveloping sense. We are living in a spiral of architectonic forces.

Until yesterday construction proceeded in a panoramic, successive manner. One house was followed by another house, one street by another.

Today we are beginning to have around us an architectural environment that develops in all directions: from the well-lighted basement floors of the big department stores, from the various levels of tunnels in the city subway systems, to the gigantic leap upward of the American skyscrapers.

The future will bring constant increasing progress to the architectural possibilities both in height and depth. Life itself will shape the age-old horizontal line of the earth's surface, with the infinite perpendicular in height and depth of the elevator, and with the spirals of the airplane and dirigible.

The future is preparing for us a sky invaded by architectonic scaffoldings.

THE ITALIAN FUTURIST PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS

INITIATORS OF THE FUTURIST ART

We may declare, without boasting, that the first exhibition of Italian futurist painting, recently held in Paris and London and now brought to San Francisco, is the most important exhibition of Italian painting which has hitherto been offered to the judgment of America.

For we are young and our art is violently revolutionary. What we have attempted and accomplished, while attracting around us a large number of skillful imitators and as many plagiarists without talent, has placed us at the head of the European movement in painting, by a road different from, yet, in a way, parallel with that followed by the post-impressionists, synthetists and cubists of France, led by their masters Picasso, Braque, Derain, Metzinger, Le Fauconnier, Gleizes, Leger, Lhote, etc.

While we admire the heroism of these painters of great worth, who have displayed a laudable contempt for artistic commercialism and a powerful hatred of academism, we feel ourselves and we declare ourselves to be absolutely opposed to their art.

They obstinately continue to paint objects motionless, frozen, and all the static aspects of Nature; they worship the traditionalism of Poussin, of Ingres, of Corot, ageing and petrifying their art with an obstinate attachment to the past, which to our eyes remains totally incomprehensible.

We, on the contrary, with points of view pertaining essentially to the future, seek for a style of motion, a thing which has never been attempted before us.

Far from resting upon the examples of the Greeks and the old masters, we constantly extol individual intuition; our object is to determine completely new laws which may deliver painting from the wavering uncertainty in which it lingers.

Our desire, to give as far as possible to our pictures a solid construction, can never bear us back to any tradition whatsoever. Of that we are firmly convinced.

All the truths learned in the schools or in the studios are abolished for us. Our hands are free enough and pure enough to start everything afresh.

It is indisputable that several of the esthetic declarations of our French comrades display a sort of masked academism.

It is not, indeed, a return to the Academy to declare that the subject, in painting, is of perfectly insignificant value?

We declare, on the contrary, that there can be no modern painting without the starting point of an absolutely modern sensation, and none can contradict us when we state that *painting* and *sensation* are *two* inseparable words.

If our pictures are futurist, it is because they are the result of absolutely futurist conceptions, ethical, esthetic, political and social.

To paint from the posing model is an absurdity, and an act of mental cowardice, even if the model be translated upon the picture in linear, spherical or cubic forms.

To lend an allegorical significance to an ordinary nude figure, deriving the meaning of the picture from the objects held by the model or from those which are arranged about him, is to our mind the evidence of a traditional and academic mentality.

This method, very similar to that employed by the Greeks, by Raphael, by Titian, by Veronese, must necessarily displease us.

While we repudiate impressionism, we emphatically condemn the present reaction which in order to kill impressionism, brings back painting to old academic forms.

Is it only possible to react against impressionism by surpassing it.

Nothing is more absurd than to fight it by adopting the pictorial laws which preceded it.

The points of contact which the quest of style may have with the so-called classic art do not concern us.

Others will seek, and will, no doubt, discover, these analogies which in any case cannot be looked upon as a return to methods, conceptions and values transmitted by classical painting.

A few examples will illustrate our theory.

We see no difference between one of those nude figures commonly called ARTISTIC and an anatomical plate. There is, on the other hand, an enormous difference between one of these nude figures and our futurist conception of the human body.

Perspective, such as it is understood by the majority of painters, has for us the very same value which they lend to an engineer's design.

The simultaneousness of states of mind in the work of art; that is the intoxicating aim of our art.

Let us explain again by examples. In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced; the sunbathed throng in the street, the double row of houses which stretch to right and left, the beflowered balconies, etc. This implies the simultaneousness of the ambient, and, therefore, the dislocation and dismemberment of objects, the scattering and fusion of details, freed from accepted logic, and independent from one another.

In order to make the spectator live in the centre of the picture, as we express it in our manifesto, the picture must be the synthesis of WHAT ONE REMEMBERS and of WHAT ONE SEES.

You must render the invisible which stirs and lives beyond intervening obstacles, what we have on the right, on the left, and behind us, and not merely the small square of life artificially compressed, as it were, by the wings of a stage.

We have declared in our manifesto that what must be rendered is the DYNAMIC SENSATION, that is to say, the particular rhythm of each object, its inclination, its movement, or, to put it more exactly, its interior force.

It is usual to consider the human being in its different aspects of motion or stillness, of joyous excitement or grave melancholy.

What is overlooked is that all inanimate objects display, by their lines, calmness or frenzy, sadness or gaiety. These various tendencies lend to the lines of which they are formed a sense and character of weighty stability or of aerial lightness.

Every object reveals by its lines how it would resolve itself were it to follow the tendencies of its forces.

This decomposition is not governed by fixed laws, but it varies according to the characteristic personality of the object and the emotions of the onlooker.

Furthermore, every object influences its neighbor, not by reflections of light (the foundation of impressionistic primitivism), but by a real competition of lines and by real conflicts of planes, following the emotional law which governs the picture (the foundation of futurist primitivism).

With the desire to intensify the aesthetic emotions by blending, so to speak, the painted canvas with the soul of the spectator, we have declared that the latter "must in future be placed in the centre of the picture."

He shall not be present at, but participate in the action. If we paint the phases of a riot, the crowd bustling with uplifted fists and the noisy onslaughts of cavalry are translated upon the canvas in sheaves of lines corresponding with all the conflicting forces, following the general law of violence of the picture.

These force-lines must encircle and involve the spectator so that he will in a manner be forced to struggle himself with the persons in the picture.

All objects tend to the infinite by their force-lines, the continuity of which is measured by our intuition.

It is these force-lines that we must draw in order to lead back the work of art to true painting. We interpret nature by rendering these objects upon the canvas as the beginnings or the prolongations of the rhythms impressed upon our sensibility by these very objects.

After having, for instance, reproduced in a picture the right shoulder or the right ear of a figure, we deem it totally vain and useless to reproduce the left shoulder or the left ear. We do not draw sounds, but their vibrating intervals. We do not paint diseases, but their symptoms and their consequences.

We may further explain our idea by a com-



The Futurist group in Paris during the exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, 1912. From left to right: Luigi Russolo, Carlo Carrà, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, and Gino Severini. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan

parison drawn from the evolution of music.

Not only have we radically abandoned the motive fully developed according to its determined and, therefore, artificial equilibrium, but we suddenly and purposely intersect each motive with one or more other motives of which we never give the full development but merely the initial, central, or final notes.

As you see, there is with us not merely variety, but chaos and clashing of rhythms, totally opposed to one another, which we nevertheless assemble into a new harmony.

We thus arrive at what we call the PAINTING OF STATES OF MIND.

In the pictorial description of the various states of mind of a leave-taking, perpendicular lines, undulating and as it were worn out, clinging here and there to silhouettes of empty bodies, may well express languidness and discouragement.

Confused and trepidating lines, either straight or curved, mingled with the outlined hurried gestures of people calling one another, will express a sensation of chaotic excitement.

On the other hand, horizontal lines, fleeting, rapid and jerky, brutally cutting into half lost profiles of faces or crumbling and rebounding fragments of landscape, will give the tumultuous feelings of the persons going away.

It is practically impossible to express in words the essential values of painting.

The public must also be convinced that in order to understand aesthetic sensations to which one is not accustomed, it is necessary to forget entirely one's intellectual culture, not in order to ASSIMILATE the work of art, but to DELIVER ONE'S SELF UP to it heart and soul.

We are beginning a new epoch of painting.

We are sure henceforward of realizing conceptions of the highest importance and the most unquestionable originality. Others will follow who, with equal daring and determination, will conquer those summits of which we can only catch a glimpse. That is why we have proclaimed ourselves to be THE PRIMITIVES OF A COMPLETELY RENOVATED SENSITIVENESS.

In several of the pictures which we are presenting to the public, vibration and motion endlessly multiply each object. We have thus justified our famous statement regarding the "RUNNING HORSE WHICH HAS NOT FOUR LEGS, BUT TWENTY."

One may remark, also, in our pictures spots, lines, zones of color which do not correspond to any reality, but which, in accordance with a law of our interior mathematics, musically prepare and enhance the emotion of the spectator.

We thus create a sort of emotive ambience, seeking by intuition the sympathies and the links which exist between the exterior (concrete) scene and the interior (abstract) emotion. Those lines, those spots, those zones of color, apparently illogical and meaningless, are the mysterious keys to our pictures.

We shall no doubt be taxed with an excessive desire to define and express in tangible form the subtle ties which unite our abstract interior with the concrete exterior.

Yet, could we leave an unfettered liberty of understanding to the public which always sees as it has been taught to see, through eyes warped by routine?

We go our way, destroying each day in ourselves and in our pictures the realistic forms and the obvious details which have served us to construct a bridge of understanding between ourselves and the public. In order that the crowd may enjoy our marvellous spiritual world, of which it is ignorant, we give it the material sensation of that world.

We thus reply to the coarse and simplistic curiosity which surrounds us by the brutally realistic aspects of our primitivism.

Conclusion: Our futurist painting embodies three new conceptions of painting:

1. That which solves the question of volumes in a picture, as opposed to the liquefaction of objects favored by the vision of the impressionists.

2. That which leads us to translate objects according to the FORCE LINES which distinguish them, and by which is obtained an absolutely new power of objective poetry.

3. That (the natural consequence of the other two) which would give the emotional ambience of a picture, the synthesis of the various abstract rhythms of every object, from which there springs a fount of pictorial lyricism hitherto unknown.

UMBERTO BOCCIONI
(Member of the Futurist Group in Milan)

MARINETTI ON BOCCIONI

[Author's note: Boccioni seems to have inspired frustrated fury in those opposed to his art and ideas, and admiration in everyone else. When Filippo Tommaso Marinetti—Futurist No. 1, the roaring boy of Italy, the "caffeine of Europe"—spoke of him, it was invariably with an unwonted note of respect, even a tenderness all but absent from his references to the other comrades in the Futurist struggles. The following excerpts from Marinetti's writings convey vividly something of what many others must have thought and felt about Boccioni in his lifetime. The first is from the catalogue of a posthumous exhibition in 1924; the others are from the memoirs the perpetual fighter wrote in 1944, shortly before he died at sixty-eight, exhausted and bedridden after almost two years of active duty on the Eastern front.]

Let us not insult Boccioni with a funeral eulogy. Commemorations of the Illustrious Deceased always brought out his most biting irony.

When the *passatisti*, lovers-of-the-past, commemorate a traditional artist they murmur between sobs: "We cannot believe he is dead; he continues to live in his immortal works; he lives and breathes here among us!" But they lie, they lie! The traditional artist is already dead in his lifetime. His works reprinted and his paintings newly exhibited are nothing but corpses reburied, new funerals added to those he had conducted in person for his already dead ideas when he was (as people thought) alive.

Here we have something very different, another atmosphere entirely, at the opposite pole of the prevailing spiritual forces. Boccioni was a great antitraditional and revolutionary innovator. He remains in actual fact alive beyond death. Much more: From all the walls loaded with his explosive colors Boccioni hurls himself ferociously against the whole lot of academic painters, against all the critics bent on smothering, against the museums, against the ruins he blew up in six years of Futurist talks and fights.

Today the many pedants of Italy Boccioni hated are cheerfully seating themselves at table around his corpse and imbibing their dainty sips

in the candlelight of history: The Origins of Boccioni's Genius; Boccioni's Intimate Life; The Artist's Soul; His Cultural Preparation; His Nostalgic Spirit Deformed by the Futurist Crowd!

Well—, no. Sorry as I am to disturb your necrophilic repast, I say to you lovers-of-the-past that Boccioni had no "cultural preparation." Read his book on Futurist painting and sculpture and you will feel the slaps in the face that shoot from its pages against any "cultural spirit." Boccioni leafed through many books, but he always preferred a pretty woman or a trip to any treatise on philosophy or aesthetics you can name. He lived his entire life reading that life of his, erasing it, rewriting it with passion. His was the great and complex spirit of an Italian Futurist. Better, he was living, plastic Futurism itself, understood as the universal dynamism of forces re-created in the extremely vivid and high-intensity colors of his Romagnolo blood. The world was remodeled dynamically by his vibrant body, utterly Italian, modern, trim and taut, which looked much more like an electric motor than like the bodies attached to those bespectacled artists of philosophy with the picturesquely powdered long hair of Old Italy. The plastic Futurism he loved is the New Italy: Elated, wide-awake, extemporaneous, and headstrong, it bristles with powerful angles, airswept spirals, belligerent colors, absolutely opposed to the wan, sagging, flabby, and stupidly fancy-frilly Italy of old.

Boccioni was deformed by no one, was never a yearner after the good old days, a solemn brainracker, a weakling. For many years he was oppressed by the most tragic poverty and an artistic environment of the most traditional and moldy and musty. He smashed out of both with one utterly incisive blow of the elbow like a mountain in earthquake, splitting open the low, leaden sky of Italian art.

An exhibition of Boccioni's work cannot be, never will be, a place of study or a clinic of philosophical anatomizing. Instead: attacks and counterattacks of new ideas. Every drawing is a challenge. Every canvas is a barbed-wire fence that Boccioni clings to by heroic innovative will, under the bombardment of the most massive, backward-yearning imbecilities. The machine guns of the pessimists, of the mediocrities, rattle away. Those who do not believe in absolute courage, in the fever of the ideal, murmur: "How in the world could a painter who had painted such a sensible painting as *Three Women* dare to turn out a picture like *Elasticity*?" I reply with his own word: *Elasticity*!

Elasticity of the most lyrical of horses, who knew how to escape from a gloomy stable and blend into the horizon, multiplying a hundredfold. I do not want to make much over *Three Women* except for the epithet "sensible" which the picture does not deserve, simply because it contains Boccioni's first attempt to go beyond Impressionism, to solidify it, to lay out the light in his own way.

The past-lovers add: "But was he really always sincere . . . ? How could that elegant, refined young man, who revealed at every instant a dreamer's melancholy and a sentimentalist's tenderness, be the most unrestrained and self-assured of the punch-up gang? Was there not perhaps in him just too much ambition and a bit of self-advertising? With that agile physique of an invincible seducer who wherever he went fascinated men and women alike, how could he contain such an intransigent up-to-the-hilt patriotism capable of and drunken with every battle and every martyrdom for the word: Italy?"

No contradiction. The same marvelous simultaneity of the most perfect temperament that the new generation of the Trentino and Carso [battlegrounds in the 1915–18 war against Austria] has produced. Perfect fusion of art and action. Spirit on the *qui vive*. Volcanic sensibility. Flood of an overflowing river of genius. Always up to the hilt, to the hilt; everything, everything, without compromises, without calculation, for the Futurist renewal of Italy; but also for less: a friend, a passing cloud. . . . And then all of a sudden his keen eyes would slip over into the most delightful humor.

To amuse himself. To love, to destroy in order to create, to fight and die: but laughing.

Boccioni's divine gaiety. An agile spirit that sunk its teeth into all the ridiculous fools, like a young fox terrier with sharp teeth but no harm intended. Unceasing flight, flying like an aviator never satisfied. Implacable hatred for every form of cliquishness and heavy-handed Teutonism. Hatred for everything still in Italy, alas, of fetid, sluggish, cumbersome Kultur.

I can still see Boccioni shaking off four policemen with one tremendous heave of his shoulders to come to my aid in that first anti-Austrian demonstration of September 1914, organized by us Futurists right in the heart of Milan, when Mussolini was still against the war and the Milanese hoped to remain Greeks. I can see Boccioni pursued by a storm of fists and raised clubs and murmuring to me in the thick of it: "I've already managed to burn four Austrian flags!" I see Boccioni handcuffed like me and



F. T. Marinetti in front of Boccioni's *Dynamism of a Soccer Player* (*Dinamismo di un footballer,* no. 75), ca. 1930. Photo: Marinetti Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven

marched off with me, lightheartedly, to the prison of San Vittore.

Boccioni on the day after the taking of Dosso Casina, on the flanks of Monte Altissimo, standing on the lookout outside our trenches, a mere hundred meters from the Austrian trenches; he had volunteered for it, forced to smother a tremendous fit of coughing in his military cape so he could go on fighting, and though tortured by the terribly intense cold, he never regretted giving up life back in the city any more than our companionable warmth in jail.

I see and hear Boccioni discussing for six hours at a stretch with two hundred painters and sculptors who had come to a gallery in Brussels to condemn him and to make him back down. He dominated, persuaded, won out, and re-established once and for all the supremacy of the Italian Futurist genius.

I see and hear Boccioni improvising in French, a language he scarcely knew, an admirable lecture in the Galerie La Boëtie, where all of intellectual Paris had gathered for his exhibition of sculpture. That day, as always, he routed a good number of traditionalist hecklers and won enthusiastic applause and embraces from the whole lot of French avant-garde painters.

After that fearful strain on his brain and nerves, Boccioni laughed, happy as a child.

This is not an exhibition but a new Futurist battle to which Boccioni, alive as ever, invites you with a laugh on his lips.

F. T. Marinetti

The following excerpts are from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Great Traditional and Futurist Milan*, 1943, and *An Italian Sensibility Born in Egypt*, 1943, translated by Arthur A. Coppotelli in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972.

Enrico Cavacchioli . . . introduces me to the head of the wild artistic bunch, Umberto Boccioni.

He strikes me at once as being a most attractive genius and a generator of novelty.

With Boccioni, we watch at Previati's the merry-go-round, horse-drawn and electric streetcars clanging their way slick automobiles evening already night the bustling of blue almost lunar cottonwool linen handkerchiefs bleating lights to be caught on canvas

Previati disapproves of the muddling critics who know nothing of the problems of painting

A long discussion about the luminosity of objects and the powdery iridescent aura that adds eloquence to the expert manipulator of lights

Obeying a mystical urge Previati loves to introduce evanescent angels and diaphanous virgins into the atmosphere thus achieving the typical religiosity that refines and idealizes for example the majestic coach of the regal Sun

"We must accustom material to expressing ideas"

Umberto Boccioni argues with me and Luigi Russolo inventor of theories and new formulas and prefers my company but perhaps in a spirit of emulation he loves to talk to me about his amorous adventures and is worried about his first elegant clothes replacing his usual black suit buttoned up to the neck matching the points of black fire in his eyes and the lean sharp face of a rebellious and ambitious Italian in search of glory

When he leaves I can always find him again at the Caffè Cova where he satisfies his yen for the life of ease among rich fashionably dressed men and women

A kind of austerity of erotic pleasure and rich pastry marks this café on the corner opposite La Scala, a corner that has known very few riots thanks to omnipresent ghosts of the Don Giovannis of thirty-five years ago who took great care of the pleats in their trousers and their high collars starched in London

The monocles used for scanning expensive prostitutes would even attract certain motorized adventuresses to the mere fantasy of a life that after all cost them nothing and with my own eyes I relished one of them most original a self-proclaimed adept of love intent on arousing tempered caresses and embraces for just so long and no longer and to hell with continuity

Boccioni craved this continuity and would lament his unhappy adolescent loves and the poverty of his family and so was intent on a powerful plasticity an aggressive Don Juanism and luxury among luxuries

He suffered from his tiny room in a little bare apartment beyond Porta Genova shared with mother and sister forced to earn their living by making shirts while he went vainly from shop to shop trying to sell his etchings and returned to a lonely dialogue with his cup of coffee he'd air his genius at the window also thirsty as it drank in the whole patchwork quarter of lopsided terraces old roofs and clothes on the line dynamized by the wind

His brush lived the metamorphosis from horse-drawn to electric streetcars and the immense buildings that the city's reinvigorated finances multiplied for the sole purpose of making money by appealing to the social ambitions of the buyers

Careening into a ditch with my 100-horse motorcar I teach about machines and speed Boccioni who was eighteen when he educated himself between Paris and the rivers of Siberia on the backs of workhorses dedicates himself to studying the possibilities of monstrously heavy wagons of stone steel beams cement stretching his nerves like reins and straps around his muscles pulling them up to the stars

Like flames the great ardent red-maned horse of Boccioni's *Città che sale* [*The City Rises*] rears up becoming his sibling Milan or rather fused right into his Calabrian-Romagnan veins

Giovanni Papini has linked himself with Futurism and pays a visit to Boccioni's new workshop which opens onto the Bastions through large glass windows that reveal his white malleable structures

"You're beginning the life of a great gentleman"

I correct Papini

"Boccioni you're becoming a workhorse in a hectic hasty city and you're trying down deep to capture the uncapturable at any price the ecstatic crisscross of lines of an unfinished block of houses rising slowly with the leaping lines of a racehorse or better yet with the movement of a loaded car with people getting in and out back and forth far and near reflections"

We argue about it with Carrà who reluctantly leaves his corner of the meeting rooms where he plays contrabass and English horn muttering extreme leftist opinions about "the need to commit the artistic crime" or "employees only"

You have to fight certain contagious moralizings with Futuristic means and such was the hundred-place dinner that Count di Rudinì offered to some elegant ladies of pleasure in the downstairs salon of the Fiaschetteria Toscana

To mock the hypocrites Count Rudinì presided over this tableful of garrulous saucy young females Boccioni is there too seething with wit the dynamic lady-killing genius all evening in that enormous liberated nest or den or tribe or harvest of the sexes happy not at all intimidated

After having struggled to compel all the forces of bodies in motion into synthetic forms with oil paints Plasticine or metal Umberto Boccioni sets up a show in a corner of Cova's including his own slim nervous figure the perfect pleat in his trousers his biting sweet smile that seduces all the women and makes several rich passéists buy his paintings even if they're not very convinced about Futurist art

Boccioni who worships friendship prefers Russolo to Carrà

The painful problems of poetry and the plastic arts are so urgently in need of renewal hail down in the train from Brussels Berlin Vienna Milan to the point where I can't stand it any longer and begin screaming right in the middle of the octagon in the middle of the Galleria

"Boccioni do you or don't you know if there's anything outside of painting"

But the beautiful Milanese Sunday with its variegated pastry of clouds and cream puffs and flaky cheese buns demands we leave off theorizing in order to enjoy art-life

Boccioni taciturn in his black austere painter's jacket buttoned up to his chin studies the workers with their jackets thrown over their shoulders and sweating dauntless waiters dashing about with trays of precariously balanced ice-cream cups in this premature summer heat

Unforgettable sight the wheelchair from which Umberto Boccioni's semiparalyzed mother with her beautiful face of an honest countrywoman of Romagna follows her eyes full of love her brilliant lively son in his soldier's uniform with the blanket that looks like a boa skin around his neck and his rifle that's too long and can't be handled like a paintbrush

Umberto Boccioni checks his theories about plastic dynamism interpenetration of planes simultaneity of radiuses shadows echoes orchestral masses of projectiles

My ears drink in this tragic dawn at the telephone

"Marinetti Marinetti get up I'm Azari get up



Umberto Boccioni, *Development of a Bottle in Space* (*Sviluppo di una bottiglia nello spazio*, no. 87), 1912. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

and get over here right away just think last night they massacred all of poor Boccioni's plastic structures I beg you come right over so we can save them"

Absurdly entrusted to an envious passéist narrow-minded sculptor they were ripped apart by the workmen anxious to clear out a profitable part of the building and all is ended

The funereal courtyard is full of the moaning slaughter of the sublime plaster sculptures hacked into livid pieces that make me sob just to look at while Azari openly weeping picks up the pieces of a bottle and some force-lines and we leave with the pitiful white remains to paste them together and put them up again

Vibrant and whole once again they triumph in Boccionian vermilion

Futurist architecture was born with Antonio Sant'Elia while in a Paris still echoing with the success of the first exhibit of Futurist painting I set up an exhibit of Boccioni's Futurist sculpture

As an innately plastic painter he is anxious to try sculpting and we go together to visit Archipenko's studio

Slavic starkness meaningful for the synthesizing energy it reveals does not entirely please Boccioni

As we go out into streets alive with flashing lights and traffic snarls I step with all my poetic might on the accelerator of Boccioni's genius

This accelerator is called pride and it's so sensitive it responds immediately to my pressure

"Dear Boccioni there's no time to lose you're ready now for the great creative efforts we're demanding of you you must be a success as a sculptor by creating a sculpture of movement and certainly you must be encouraged by the birth of Orphism shaped by what Lhote calls sensitive Cubism and influenced by us and our discussions

"Remember that Picasso created his *Port of Le Havre* because in reality we're the ones who persuaded him to give up his cold engineering style and the anatomical dissections of objects and to come over to our fiery lyricism that embraces the universe including the modern electrified city we love"

We return to Milan and in Boccioni's studio sculpted muscular shapes of speed are taking form and especially his great polymaterial velocities the first sculptures of ambience light and shadow made solid

The ignition of Boccioni's genius having been switched on I return with him for the opening of the first show of Futurist sculpture at La Boëtie the most famous gallery on the street of artists

An unforgettable afternoon for the almost divine fervor of our devotion before the miracles of art and this supreme new beauty

A strange creative originality burned in the air brushing against our nerve ends like razor strokes imparting fresh energy

At the door Guillaume Apollinaire—the egg-shaped fat almond oily high priest of novelty and eccentricity with a honeyed smile his big intelligent eyes, half-Polish half-Roman —whispers to me in Italian:

"The aims of Futurism are bound to succeed and you're right all the way I'm joining your words-in-freedom movement and I'll announce it publicly and you can announce it to this gathering of important Parisians"

We greet Picasso Gleizes Lhote Delaunay and his wife Valmier the art dealer Rosenberg the art critic Fénéon the semi-Futurist philosopher Mercereau and the poet Salmon while Boccioni grips my hand and mutters

"You're forward enough you do the talking because I don't know any French and it's absurd you know really absurd for me to try to speak in French off the cuff"

"You're the one the public is interested in and as the most daring sculptor in the world you must do you understand must Futurism commands you improvise your ideas and explanations in French I'm sure you can do it"

Boccioni launches into the strangest most tortured wheezing cut-up patched-up explosive flowing gesticulating propped-up lecture imaginable and when I remember it he seems a prodigy of prodigies

Boccioni can't speak French but he has so many pretty prompters always providing the right word that he forces himself with come-on looks and gestures to explain plasticity affinities contrasts so that everyone understands admires especially the beauties stretched out on red rugs under the bold musculature of the white plastic structures

Polymaterial environment with surprises Tastéven a small carefully dressed gentleman looking like an important official of some ministry comes over to greet me his blond goatee twitching and his little red Russian eyes sparkling

"As director of the lecturers' group in Moscow I have the honor of inviting you to give a series of lectures in the larger Russian cities lectures for which you will be paid whatever you ask with half your fee in advance and traveling expenses do come if possible because they're waiting for you anxiously in Saint Petersburg and Moscow"

I accept and run over to help out Boccioni tying together in one ad lib speech plastic dynamism and the simultaneous essential surprising quality of words-in-freedom and I announce that Guillaume Apollinaire has declared himself a free-word Futurist and I'm pleased to see among the plumed hats of famous beautiful poetesses Gustave Kahn and the Parisianized American *vers-libriste* Vielé-Griffin author of *La Chevauchée d'Yeldis* both showing great empathy with me and Boccioni by approving of our undoubted victory over poetry and the human figure in order to poeticize the velocity of whole environments and freeze them forever

EXCERPTS FROM BOCCIONI'S DIARY

The same complexity found in Boccioni's visual works, the same intensity and depth of personality caught in the perpetual dialectic between spirit and reality, between self-awareness and instinctive feeling, is reflected in his letters and diaries. These writings expose a difficult and tormented nature whose contradictions leap out from virtually every page. He incessantly hunts after new things to express and new ways to express them, berates his own incapacity and weakness, and wanders off into long monologues that hold up a mirror to his own dissatisfaction. A unifying thread links the pages of his diary, his letters to family and friends, and his scattered notes: a sense of inner emptiness, along with the oft-repeated difficulty of putting into words the religious conviction —the feeling of something universal permeating all things—that he experiences deep within him.

The diary covers only the brief period from January 1907 to August 1908. It comprises three notebooks: the first from January 6 through September 12, 1907; the second from the latter date through December 30 of the same year; and the third from January 2 through August 24, 1908. In a later, wartime diary, kept from August 7 through October 27, 1915, he noted his impressions of life at the front, chiefly describing things done and felt at particular moments of action.



Umberto Boccioni, *I-We-Boccioni* (*Io noi Boccioni*), ca. 1906. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

The diary of 1907–1908 is an invaluable document. These years were ones of great desperation but also of most concentrated study. His mind was filled with ideas he could sense but not express, and this awareness of how much he was falling short of his own aims gnawed at him incessantly. Thus, along with accounts of real-life activities and encounters, the diary offers succinct sketches of abstract theorizations, comments on his readings and on other artists, and intimate remarks concerning his sentimental life or the opinions of artists and other persons he had met, often concealing the identities under code names. Boccioni emerges with the force of a Romantic hero assailed by doubts but forever holding high the grail of "creation" as the sole means of transcending and vanquishing an unknown and perhaps unknowable foe.

March 14, 1907

I have been out in the country to work and found nothing. The same old lines bore me, nauseate me, I am fed up with fields and little houses. And to think that when I first came to Padua I was enthusiastic about them and hopeful.

I must confess that I seek, seek, seek—and find nothing. Will I ever? Yesterday I was tired of the big city, today I desire it with all my heart. Tomorrow what will I want? I feel that I want to paint what is new, the fruit of our industrial times. I am nauseated by old walls, old palaces, old subjects based on reminiscence: I want to have my eye on the life of today. Fields, quiet things, little houses, woods, faces flushed and strong, workers' limbs, weary horses, etc. —that whole storehouse of modern sentimentalism has bored me. Indeed, all of modern art looks old to me. I want what is new, expressive, formidable! I want to cancel out all the values I have known, know now, and am losing sight of. I want to make things anew, rebuild on new bases! All of the past, however marvelous, oppresses me. I want the new! And I lack the elements to conceive what stage we are in and what we need.

What is this to be done with? With color? Or with drawing? With painting? With realistic tendencies that no longer satisfy me, with symbolist tendencies that please me in few artists and that I have never tried? With an idealism that attracts me, and yet I don't know how to make it concrete?

It seems to me that today, while scientific analyses make us see the universe marvelously, art should make itself the interpreter of the mighty, inescapable resurgence of a new positive idealism. Art and artists seem to me to be in conflict with science today. . . . There is a misunderstanding. Is what I am saying true, or am I mistaken?

It is certainly true that if, in some fantastic way, I could go somewhere entirely new, after long study I would make new things.

Now I feel myself the product of my time, and it seems to me that everything here in Padua is old. This feeling extends to all of Italy, almost, except for a little of the North, and from it I draw the conclusion that we are all living outside our environment. Our feverish age makes old and obsolete whatever was turned out yesterday. What can be inspiring if not purely technical from an ambience that is no longer alive today? Everything in Italy seems obsolete to me: an enormous museum for things to do with art, an enormous junk shop for practical things.

The streets, lines, people, sentiments all smell of yesterday, aggravated by the indefinable odor of today. We live in a historical dream. This delights foreigners, who come here exactly for

repose, but I shudder to think that twentieth-century historians will have nothing to say about Italy.

March 28, 1907

As repeatedly for some time now, music is more and more in my mind, which was never before the case with me. I understand Beethoven intuitively and grasp almost all of Wagner. I dream of giving my pictures Music's power to stir the feelings, to suggest through form the flights of the spirit. I first had that idea at the Luxembourg in Paris in August 1906; I was about to leave for Russia, and I thought as soon as I arrived in Tsaritsyn I would paint a picture called *Visions of the Volga*. Though I didn't do it, there were going to be camels, muzhiks, the Volga, and other things. Certainly Balla is losing his sway over me, but I'm far from being completely free of him. Yesterday Mama left, and I am alone and *undone*.

Sunday, July 7, 1907

More and more I realize that the organic defect in Modern Art is the absence of universality, or at least of what I call that feeling for poetry that fills ancient works and makes the artist's song spread with loving exaltation throughout everything he creates. The exhaustive analyses made in our century have resulted in the creation of specialists. This explains the lack of universality in modern works. I believe that what is needed is a great mind, with the courage and strength to synthesize modern knowledge and create a *true* work.

Ultimately, though, I think our difficulties are no greater than those the old artists encountered. What is needed is faith and talent: This means giving a good solid kick to all of it and going back to raising ourselves up on our own.

Looking at the drawings in the Accademia I could convince myself that not one of the old works lacked the elements that make up the world! Virtually every picture, every drawing had its own verse to express everything. The painter-poet's eye passed from the loving design of a drapery fold to the depths of the human eye, to the grace of a young girl, to the softness of grass, to the majesty of woods, skies, horizons, and seas, to the serene goodness of animals; and all of it, made with colors and a loving hand, came to the eye of whoever was admiring it with the caress of a thousand memories, a thousand existences. That was life, that was verism. Today, however. . .

Milan, September 21, 1907

I have sold a little decorative thing for 25 lire and have got an order for a publicity piece. Let us hope things continue well. I have found a nice room and am dreaming of immense work and immense calmness, of a busy future full of pictures, drawings, etchings, decorations —everything, everything. And above all, of singing of this modern epoch of ours that almost all artists detest. Yesterday was a good day, working things out with healthy enthusiasm for the new forms. I really want to find the way to express them and make them acceptable to great numbers of people. It seems impossible that artists in the past hated their age in the same way that today's artists hate the present. And it is impossible that the artists in the sixteenth century—even granting that our art is still developing—dreamed of past art with the same nostalgia that we dream of theirs. This is stupid, a sign of weakness and degeneration. Art is not over and done with, as weak-brained sentimentalists wail; it is undergoing a transformation. Humanity is moving forward and is changing profoundly, just as a man changes from a boy—a man of genius, of course, and humanity is itself a divine universal genius.

The great heart and brain of humanity today are moving toward a maturity made from precision and exactness and positivism. Its poetry is of the straight line and the computation, with everything becoming rectangular, square, pentagonal, etc. I find this in all the functions of life. It seems to me that everything is moving toward either the decisively finite or the infinite: Half-truths or dim mists are no longer satisfying.

Maybe it has always been so, but I believe there is as much material for poetry today as in times gone by. The form changes, and the artists for whom the form is a religious heritage to be preserved have become ridiculous conservatives. The world is entering one more new era and seeks real substance for it; conversely, Art must become a function of life, and artists must not, *ought not* hold themselves disdainfully aloof (I feel I have pronounced a blasphemy): *Art* is too universal to do anything of the sort.

Artists today are out of step with the process of transformation, for scientists are studying and creating, living and breathing along with the universal spirit that lies all around them, but artists are creating dead things, and in a language unknown to the many, and even to the few. Yet it cannot be that the era of art has ended while that of science has taken over, that humanity no longer has need of song. There is still and always an infinite joy and an infinite sorrow that laughs and weeps. But what formula will render human inspiration? Is it not always the same? But with what means? *That* is the problem! Unfortunately my mind becomes confused and blocked, and my conclusions frighten me.

Today my thinking ran along joyfully, and I could explain why I am against everything in art that looks hazy and disordered. It strikes me that my temperament is compounded of precision and scruples, more attuned to the poetry of mathematics and the steel in humankind today. I feel the need for geometry in my work, for calculating and reckoning things up toward a totality that may be rigid but is well organized and clear to the eye. Nothing can be done about this: I feel it is so, and will continue to.

$$A + A = B \text{ because}$$
$$2 + 2 = 4$$

I may be wrong, but that is how I feel, for now at least.

Sunday, December 21, 1907

Fundamentally I am in a cold period. The noble tension that kept me up these last days has slackened off. I work little at art and am indifferent to humble matters. I am earning enough and spending nothing on myself. I am making a start on the life I desire: That is the only progress. Am reading Previati's *Technique of Painting* and feel humiliated in the face of such technical erudition. I am a total ignoramus. But what can I do—how, where, when can I study all that chemistry and physics? Life barely allows me time for doing the petty things that have to be done!

I am reading Müntz's book on the Renaissance. The words he writes about Leonardo, Michelangelo, Bramante, Raphael make my own small self fade away like snow in the sun. How can I believe myself to be somebody in the face of those giants?

God for me is Nature with her forms and colors, yet I strike myself as a novice priest who likens himself to God just because he is beginning to babble a mass! Am I babbling?

Today an article on Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods* really laid me out—what were those great ones like? Their souls? their bodies? their desires?

I am becoming more and more stupid and

mediocre all the time, yet I hope for—what? Glory, money, honors! and then what? And is my youth worth all that?

Leopardi also said it, but I repeat it or, better, I feel it too: Never has the idea of the end so troubled me as now.

I work, work, work . . . and why? I will die, and then? All my things scattered here and there or on junk dealers' counters . . . and then? Someone will weep, someone will laugh, and then? People will love one another, run after one another, kill one another, and then? May my mother at least live long enough for my work to bring her happiness for the rest of the journey. And then?

Milan, January 2, 1908
[beginning a new volume of the diary]

> To the girl of the first kiss;
> to the friend of my young years;
> to the companion perhaps of my
> triumphant maturity, I dedicate
> this with love
> (*night of January 2, 1908*)
>
> "It is a beautiful thing to live on after death"
> (from a sixteenth-century print)
>
> "To be a character, to have the strength to live without friends, alone with one's own ideal: that is the freedom to boast of. To it are opposed the human proprieties, respect for one's parents, the family . . ."
> (from Henrik Ibsen)

With the gift of this book one of my many desires is gratified. A book in which to record thoughts and actions of my life. A good day today. Calmness and hope. Tomorrow I absolutely begin to work! For some days did nothing but loaf about, suffering no grave misery because of it . . . Yet my goal seems far off, confused, undefinable. Tomorrow everything will start anew! My spirit is still humble and religious. Have spent some good moments with Her. Such good sense and such simplicity. After Mama and Amelia [his sister], she is the only person I can devote an hour to without everything being thrown into doubt. But doubt and discontent are always with me . . . I should like to rise, rise, rise! I think of Baudelaire's "There, all is order, beauty, sensual pleasure . . ." . . . I am empty and futile because I am not working: Take heart. I have seen a French poster that was not perfect but extraordinary in its modern expression. The usual idea comes back to me: Will posterity look at things like that or at our own pictures, which are more or less egotistical, directionless, without point or purpose, hollow, insane, cretinous, pandering, and all the other things that can be said about them? I don't know the answer yet; no one writes to me, which almost pleases me. How will the new year be? The last one had a so-so ending but it was full of good will, much better than the year before. I am glad I made Mama enjoy herself. I must end with a prayer to the Unknown, to the Great Mother: "May I be given the humility and the strength to face the sacred mysteries as an innocent, without ambition or falseness. May my hands create a song of adoration, of exaltation for all, from the blade of grass to the tree, from a droplet to the immense sky, from a worm to man! May all things be transformed in my mind in accord with the supreme Truth, passing no judgment for good or evil, nor for the beautiful or the ugly; may I, while constantly loving and studying what is nearest to my dream, never lose my comprehension of the universe!"

February 1, 1908

For two weeks now I have not had the energy to take out this book and write. I am moving ahead in the life I want, a life of concentrated thought and work. To tell the truth I am not studying much, but my mind is quite alert and fairly clear in pursuing my chosen aim. Soon it will go better. I have bought three magnificent books on Dürer, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt: will pay for them in monthly installments of 3 lire. The masthead for the *Lavoro Italiano* was rejected after repeated changes and corrections. Signor Lombardo wanted to compensate me but I refused; I wish I had done the same with Ricordi.

I take my only recreation now in contemplating the works of these three supreme masters, and a few hours spent with Her. We have drawn closer again since a long discussion full of my justifiable reproaches. I cherish her company and feel I will never open myself up as much to any other woman.

Rembrandt staggers me with his marvelous pictorial vision of any and every object he sees. He seems the father of the modern luminists, but how remote he is from my ideal! I feel like the very opposite of him! So many vulgar forms, so much mere prose goes through his extraordinary eye! How paltry the form in all, or almost all, his engravings! Only his immense love and hard work seem to me to have saved him from mediocrity. In his paintings Rembrandt is quite another person, the wizard of impasto and the brush . . . yet so many clumsy heads. It's true that I don't know what Flemish [Dutch] art was like when he began. I don't much like Flemish genre pictures and interiors except by the greatest masters (I am a real ignoramus), and for me Rembrandt is the man who took flight, true enough, but was held to the commonplace and prosaic, by the coarseness, the shapeless fat roundness of the race that inspired him. I will study him further because such loving effort humbles me, but for the moment I am at a loss between his magnificent things and his puerile if not outright horrible deficiencies. . . .

Michelangelo! How can I even venture with my poor words to speak of Him. Who am I? Why am I writing? For myself? Yes, and perhaps that permits me to say that I bow down and worship. I worship everything about him, even his excessive servility to the classical! Oh mysterious power of genius! I cannot always follow him at the point where I see him crossing a threshold and entering into the Mystery. So I worship, and that is enough! Yet I also love to think of him—I do not know why—in the midst of such endless seas of work, of passion, of grief and serenity, going humbly and sadly to meet the divine Vittoria Colonna in the church high on Monte Cavallo in Rome. What did he have to say to her, the widow of the marchese of Pescara? I know he exhorted her to place her hope in God . . . Oh infinite poetry of the world! Moments like these, the remembrance of an episode far removed in time, can rise imperceptibly into my consciousness and become attached to some chance noise or some visible shape nearby. . . . I cannot put into words what I feel—to say that tears come to my eyes is laughable. Perhaps in pictures [like] a musician in his music or a poet in verses, something will come of what I was saying four lines above that has already slipped my mind.

Mama is still in bed; in a few days they will operate on her.

February 13, 1908

I have spent three days in hell, a more painful crisis than I have had in months. Everything had collapsed . . . art, life, everything! More and more I feel it is impossible to live in this horrible world: Every so often I feel myself stumbling into obstacles—barriers, traps, filth, let's admit it—that aren't found in people like me (that is, of the same breed). Everything strikes me as rough and harsh; my sensibilities are wounded in every part. Things and people

humiliate me; they beat me down or at least make fun of me. Really I feel secure only with Mama and Amelia. And though I am making progress I always end up finding myself talking with somebody and then the torment begins: I am a weakling! Everyone else seems to be harsh, stupid, and vicious, getting by on ready-made phrases and ideas, when I come on the scene, talk, and open myself up so I can learn: To convince myself I strip myself bare, trying to make myself more forceful and accessible to even the slightest kind of understanding, and then the bully I am talking to laughs at me and lashes out at me. This happens to me *with everybody*! It must come from the longing for affection, for communion, that torments me. Much as past experience makes me keep up my guard and be suspicious, when I come across someone who meets me halfway and talks with me according to his own capacity and nature, and I see the little world that stirs itself in the creature and moves within the universal immensity, I am almost always impelled to encourage him, in spite of myself, to reveal to him something in or outside of myself that might console him as others have done for me, and with my gratitude. . . . But what a mistake! Immediately I sense that all the goodness I put into my offering offends that person. Suddenly he puts up his guard, takes the measure of his weapons, finds my weak points, and strikes out at me at the first chance. This has happened with everyone, even my most intimate friend, and will always happen to me. If I confided all this to someone I know I would already be weeping for having said it. Right away I would be confronted with the usual phrases about Christianity, paganism, Nietzsche and individualism, egoism, egotism, and all the rest. Right now, though, talking to myself with no one to laugh or interrupt, I admit that I don't know what is in me, Christian or pagan, humble or proud, weak or strong. I know that I came into the world smiling and I will leave it weeping! Experience has introduced drop by drop all the hatred, suffering, and bitterness that afflict me now. Everyone, from cherished friend to indifferent acquaintance, has stabbed me in the back. Everything I have been taught is false and serves to bolster up the universal rabble; and my desire, my dream of living with sincerity and love, is a bubble that will burst anew with every day, though each day I will try hard to blow it up again. Alas, I see no remedy for all this but death.

Here a hundred people would laugh at me, crying that everybody knows that this is an old story, but I confess I find it terribly new.



Boccioni in his studio with *Head + House + Light* (*Testa + casa + luce,* 1911–12; later destroyed), ca. 1912. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

What exasperates me is people self-assuredly accepting or rejecting things I haven't decided for myself and won't ever be able to.

Faced with existence, most people have a self-assurance that dismays me. Where do they find it? Can they be more religious or more humble than I am? Do they have more fervor than I in working things out, attacking a problem, experiencing a joy received? How do they go through their day without sensing in themselves something terrible, hollow, useless? Have they never looked around them? Given serious thought to anything? Stopped to look at water, at grass, at animals?

And the lawgivers—but where in the world did they find a model to go by, and if they have found one, can it possibly satisfy them sincerely? Are they liars or sages?

Yet this I know: To go on living, one needs a religion, a faith, and I feel that my spirit has it, but it is terrifying because it is limitless, not finite. To find a little security, must one fall back on humiliating dogma? And the great men who lived in times when their religious dogma was never questioned, were they sure of themselves? To reassure myself, must I create a tangible symbol, burn incense before it, kneel down and worship it? But the countryside, the city, human beings, beasts from the fly to the eagle, from the grub to man, from moss to the oak tree—these symbols, these very deities, should they not be enough? The works of man, the mysteries of the animal mind, the clouds, the waters, do they not fill me with joy and love? . . . yet something is missing. Perhaps it is that I have never been strong enough to carry through and fulfill what I have promised myself to do. And if that is the cause, am I so low and base as to need the whip laid on to make me do what I say? And if the whip made me do it, would I be any more content? . . .

March 22, 1908

Sunday. I have become a different person in the past few days. What do I feel? I don't work, don't earn anything, wander about, read, think. And when I set about thinking in my relative solitude I *feel* differently, or better. The ideal of love and purity I have always felt in my deepest heart comes back to me in a more orderly fashion. There is in me an ever deeper religiousness, a growing tenderness, and a wish to lighten and elevate myself.

Certainly I am changing in some way; being alone makes me turn inward. Soon I shall overcome many bad habits that upset the musical

harmony that should govern my adult existence. Within me is a voice I have never managed to smother entirely. Friends as foolish as myself, books misunderstood, my free and passionate youth, these have led me to believe in a different self from my real one. Yet I hear something from that voice within me. What is it? The question is so serious and profound that I dare not try to analyze it further. I sense many inner fears and doubts that do not let me be sincere, and so I continue to wait.

The facts I am going to write down now will explain many things to me. I have read (I, at my age, with my life) *My Prisons* [the memoirs of Silvio Pellico, published in 1832 after eight years' imprisonment for rebellion against Austrian rule in northern Italy, recording the spiritual crisis and religious conversion undergone by this former liberal, a member of the revolutionary secret society of the Carbonari], and I have been deeply moved by them! I must admit they shook me. I feel that I could not say this to anyone else without shame or embarrassment, yet it is so. I am aware of everything deficient, petty, mean, weak, one-sided in them, still . . . something directly touches that within us which, I believe, may evolve in future centuries and bring shape to a higher humanity. With these words, I am putting down three-quarters of my past life! Offences ought to be received with an understanding smile and a pacific heart, not with a philosophy for savage brutes. What displeases me in him [Pellico] is his clinging to outward form: He rules out all salvation outside the Catholic Church and rejoices when a Protestant foreswears his faith; he speaks of order, authority, and government, denouncing Voltaire's philosophy as petty and others as impious or worse; he makes much too much of the cliques and spites which seem to him to have grown worse in his time; and he goes too far in justifying confession, communion, saints, and the Virgin Mary. . . . A while back I would have laughed but now I deplore it that, with the evidence he had, he strived so greatly to find strength by looking backward at the past, not forward to the future. Why could he not see a spasmodic quest for the truth, that is, for divinity even in the philosophies closest to atheism? For me, every philosophy is a search for God. And to consider this today, on the eve of universal brotherhood, as the monopoly of one church is either factious partisanship or weakness of mind or both. I can understand why the liberals of the time inveighed against his book.

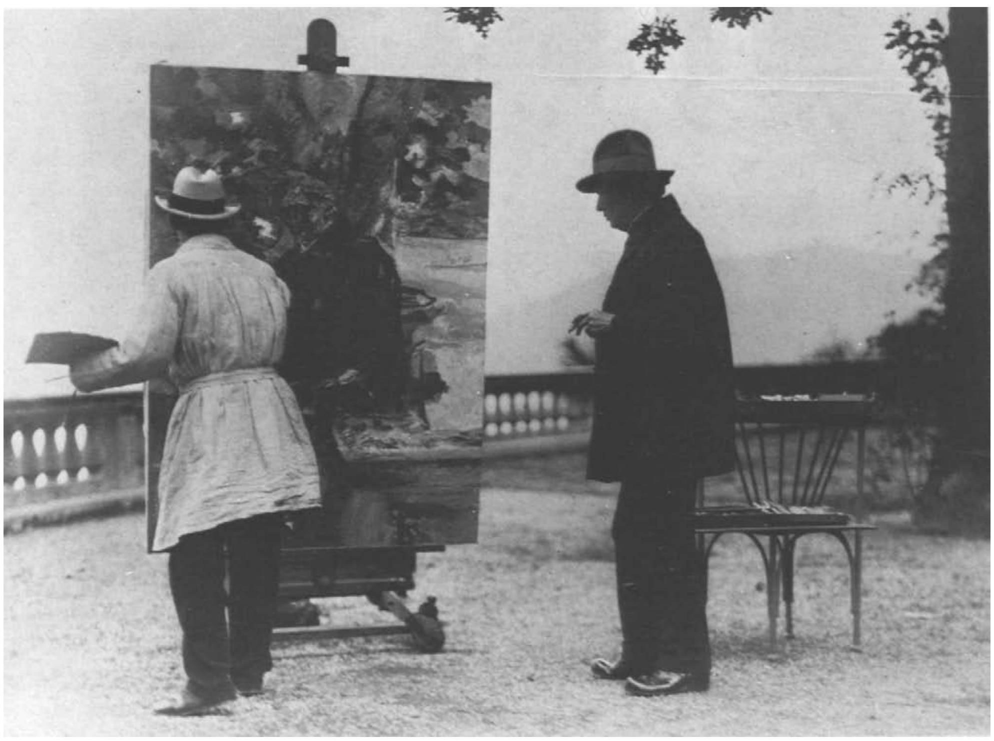
I cannot submit to any Absolute, for the Absolute is in ourselves. That same aspiration to perfection that invades us when we think of Christ the Son of God, of the Revelation, and the dogmas is what I hear in my own blind, inward, profound voice. For the present I dare not give it a name. Is it Art? Is it a musical need? Aesthetic?

Art imitates Nature, Nature is God. The imitation of God is aspiration to perfection, is religion. Art is religious.

Oh! Ideal, thou, thou alone exists! I cannot recall the source of that exclamation, but now it is mine.

Whatever Silvio Pellico's deductions, his book deserves its fame. It has brought me understanding and as has happened so often before, it fell into my hands at a moment when I was tormented by similar problems. Who brings events like that to pass?

I owe to it that yesterday, after one of my usual ignoble angry outbursts against Mama, I was able to repent as never before and put my arms around her and kiss her.



Boccioni working on his portrait of Ferruccio Busoni (no. 86) in 1916 while at Pallanza on Lake Maggiore. Photo: Luca Carrà, Milan. Courtesy Angelo Calmarini

Notes for a Diary

[Internal evidence suggests that these scattered notes were written after August 1908, when the third volume of the diary breaks off, and during the formation of the group of Futurist painters in 1910. This event wrought a virtually total change in Boccioni's personality, from introspective psychologizing and self-analysis to objective theorizing, an extroverted delight in verbal imagery, and the satisfaction of acting together with like-minded friends.]

The greatest man reveals himself to be so totally without real power that one can understand the desire to break away from him, to flee, to make oneself bigger than he. . . . But perhaps living and creating is the only revenge, the only possible insult against the unknown which has already left its mark on us and from which we will never escape.

The world as masterpiece and what exists as idea.

Idea of war.

Idea of love.

Idea of friendship, etc.

Idea of the absolute and therefore of God.

Great tragedies as exemplars of how impossible it is for the absolute to carry over into the relative. Everything strives to express itself, that is, to define itself, therefore to perish. Love and death, the beginning and end of the self-determination of life.

. . . by impetus, a little by will.

I fear everything for my art and more than all I fear becoming skeptical. I have observed that when I have centered my thoughts on a person, that person, as if moved by a superior and inimical force, acts toward me, without wishing to do so, in exactly those ways that have always plunged me into suffering and despair.

This must not happen anymore. A good deal of it is my own fault. The impossibility for me of settling for half measures, the continual falling into extremes, my absolute exactingness, my furious desire to be loved, to forget myself by dissolving my individuality in another whom I sense will mediate between myself and the infinite—all this does not make my relation with another person easy or smooth.

It is extremely painful for me to acknowledge my loneliness, but I must, for I have made it. I have no friends because their struggle for success makes them false and cruel. If I have women friends, it is difficult to know why. . . this is to be figured out. To make a quick judgment, it seems to me that for a woman friendship is cold-blooded and calm and therefore not satisfying, because true friendship is always warm and fervid; when by a miracle [friendship occurs] in like-minded persons, it obeys the physical law of communicating volumes: What penetrates the one goes over into the other until an equilibrium is reached. Or else friendship for a woman is hot-blooded and agitated and then leads to love—that is, to the end of everything. This is because I believe in love as an absolute idea which completes itself with the leap into the infinite. And if this is in a work of art, which means the union of opposites, that leap can be grasped and fixed with a rhythm of lines and colors and sounds so that it ravishes for an instant the soul of anyone who comprehends it every time he puts himself in contact with the work. It is logical that the union of two opposites seek to become absolute love; both being physical entities in continuous transformation, they must adapt themselves to attain it and so perish, or live on miserably like everyone else because the *absolute union* cannot be repeated.

In a few lines I can hardly explain and reveal all the struggles within me now, and give any idea of the continual attacks of my critical sense against all that made up my consciousness yesterday.

This I can say, that nothing in me remains standing. I have uprooted all of it and whatever still stands is tottering.

Yet, if some tendency is predominating in me at this time, it is the spasmodic search for reconstruction. That reconstruction is constantly surveyed by my critical sense, which keeps me from falling into a dogma already left behind.

All of my work recently has been a search for the prime cause: in art and therefore in life. I have tried to make every act of my will correspond as closely as possible to the *motives* which I feel constitute my inner edifice.

I have sought to ensure that the answers to the questions I posed myself would correspond to the architectonic necessities of the plan that was in me. I have observed that many ideas I fought for so hard in the past were simply acquired ideas that were superimposed on what was fundamental in me.

Those poorly digested ideas impelled me to generalize. Generalizing, I lost the concept of myself or mislaid it temporarily, remaining disarmed and at the mercy of the first comer.

This *indetermination*, this chaotic tendency, proved open to any and every idea, and so I did not take on ideas as materials for my construction but put myself at the service of all the ideas that happened to pass through my brain.

This eclecticism, this dilettantism, brought me annoyance and suffering. They brought on the malaise of someone who feels himself attached to nothing; they gave me the doubt of someone who has no faith in triumph; they gave me the apathy, skepticism, and intolerance of the scientific temperament.

I have put together everything I have observed in the character of our time, and I have found that what makes us unsure is the lack of a faith, of something beyond questioning. We who are forever at the same point in facing the infinite lack a new *finite* that could be the symbol of our new conception of the infinite.

Philosophically we have demolished the concept of a God as creator and judge, and in consequence his representatives on earth have lost our respect socially. Art, naturally enough, reflects these demolitions and goes its way blindly. A kind of fantastic interpretation of nature has been made in landscapes, but we must admit that this has been more an attitude of isolated intellectuals than emotions of a universal aspiration.

And so we are without religion, without society, without art.

Therefore a philosophy must now arise for a new religion and thus the need of a dogma; it is necessary that the ambition and will of one individual or many must make a new society arise. As soon as we have this, the era of a great art will have begun. We need to define some things in which we can believe.



Boccioni in his military uniform with his mother and sister. Photo: Luciano Pollini. Courtesy private archive, Padua

What I call love needs, if it is to repeat itself, a spirituality perhaps impossible of attainment for physical beings; and if we think of the bestial life that most men lead, the sublime grotesqueness of human suffering over questions of love is seen at once, and perhaps also the beauty of double suicides after a night of love or the tragedy from a no or a yes.

Remember Tristan and Isolde?

What can exist between a superior man and a superior woman is rather more a matter of head than heart. Many times—but it is useless to say it here, first because it is a lengthy matter, then because I am tired of writing: It is not my trade. If my friends call me the philosopher of our group that doesn't flatter me much and I don't believe it.

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La pittura futurista: Manifesto tecnico. Signed by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini; published as a leaflet by *Poesia* (Milan), April 11, 1910.

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"Contro la vigliaccheria artistica italiana." *Lacerba* (Florence) 1, no. 17 (Sept. 1, 1913), pp. 190–91.

"Programma politico futurista," signed by F. T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo. *Lacerba* (Florence) 1, no. 20 (Oct. 15, 1913), pp. 1–2.

"Scarpetta da società + orina: Parole in libertà." *Lacerba* (Florence) 1, no. 22 (Nov. 15, 1913), pp. 254–56.

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"Dinamismo plastico." *Lacerba* (Florence) 1, no. 24 (Dec. 15, 1913), pp. 288–90.

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"Simultaneità futurista." *Lacerba* (Florence) 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 1914), pp. 12–13.

"Uomo + vallata + montagna: Parole in libertà." *Lacerba* (Florence) 2, no. 3 (Feb. 1, 1914), pp. 44–45.

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"Il cerchio non si chiude!" *Lacerba* (Florence) 2, no. 5 (March 1, 1914), pp. 67–69.

"Moto assoluto + moto relativo = Dinamismo." *Lacerba* (Florence) 2, no. 6 (March 15, 1914), pp. 90–93 [advance extract from *Pittura, scultura futuriste*].

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List of Exhibitions

Rome 1905a
LXXV Esposizione internazionale di belle arti. Rome, Società degli Amatori e Cultori, Feb.–March 1905

Rome 1905a
LXXV Esposizione Internazionale di Belle Arti. Rome, Società degli Amatori e Cultori, Feb.–March 1905

Rome 1905b
Mostra dei Rifiutati. Rome, Ridotto del Teatro Nazionale, Feb.–March 1905

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LXXVI Esposizione internazionale di belle arti. Rome, Società degli Amatori e Cultori, Feb.–March 1906

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Esposizione di pittura e scultura. Brunate, May–June 1909

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Esposizione annuale d'arte della Famiglia Artistica. Milan, Famiglia Artistica, Dec. 15, 1909–Jan. 8, 1910

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Mostra annuale degli artisti lombardi. Milan, Palazzo della Permanente, spring 1910

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Mostra d'estate in Palazzo Pesaro. Venice, Ca' Pesaro, July 16–Oct. 20, 1910

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Esposizione annuale d'arte della Famiglia Artistica. Milan, Famiglia Artistica, Dec. 1910–Jan. 1911

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Mostra d'Arte Libera: I manifestazione collettiva dei Futuristi. Milan, Padiglione Ricordi, spring 1911

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Esposizione intima annuale. Milan, Famiglia Artistica, Dec. 1911

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Les peintres futuristes italiens. Paris, Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Feb. 5–24, 1912

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Zweite Ausstellung: Die Futuristen. Berlin, Galerie Der Sturm, April 12–May 31, 1912

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Les peintres futuristes italiens. Brussels, Galerie Georges Giroux, May 20–June 1, 1912

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Erster deutscher Herbstsalon. Berlin, Galerie Der Sturm, Sept. 20–Nov. 1913

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XXV Esposizione Biennale Internazionale d'Arte: Retrospettiva di Boccioni. Venice, June 8–Oct. 15, 1950

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Rome 1955–56
VII Quadriennale nazionale d'arte: Antologia della pittura e scultura italiana dal 1910 al 1930. Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Nov. 1955–April 1956

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Ausstellung italienischer Kunst von 1910 bis zur Gegenwart. Munich, Haus der Kunst, June 7–Sept. 15, 1957

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Peintres et sculpteurs italiens du Futurisme à nos jours. Blois, Château, 1959 [traveled to various French cities]

Winterthur 1959
Futurismus. Winterthur, Kunstmuseum, Oct. 4–Nov. 15, 1959; traveled to: Munich, Städtische Galerie und Lembachgalerie, Dec. 5, 1959–Feb. 14, 1960

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Boccioni: Mostra di opere inedite prefuturiste, dipinti e disegni del periodo futurista. Milan, Famiglia Artistica, Feb. 6–28, 1960

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Futurism. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, May 31–Sept. 5, 1961; traveled to: The Detroit Institute of Arts, Oct. 18–Dec. 19, 1961; Los Angeles County Museum, Jan. 14–Feb. 19, 1962

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XXXIII Esposizione internazionale d'arte: Retrospettiva di Boccioni. Venice, June 18–Oct. 16, 1966

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Le Futurisme 1909–1916. Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Sept. 19–Nov. 19, 1973

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Futurismus 1909–1917: Wir setzen den Betrachter mitten ins Bild. Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, March 17–April 28, 1974

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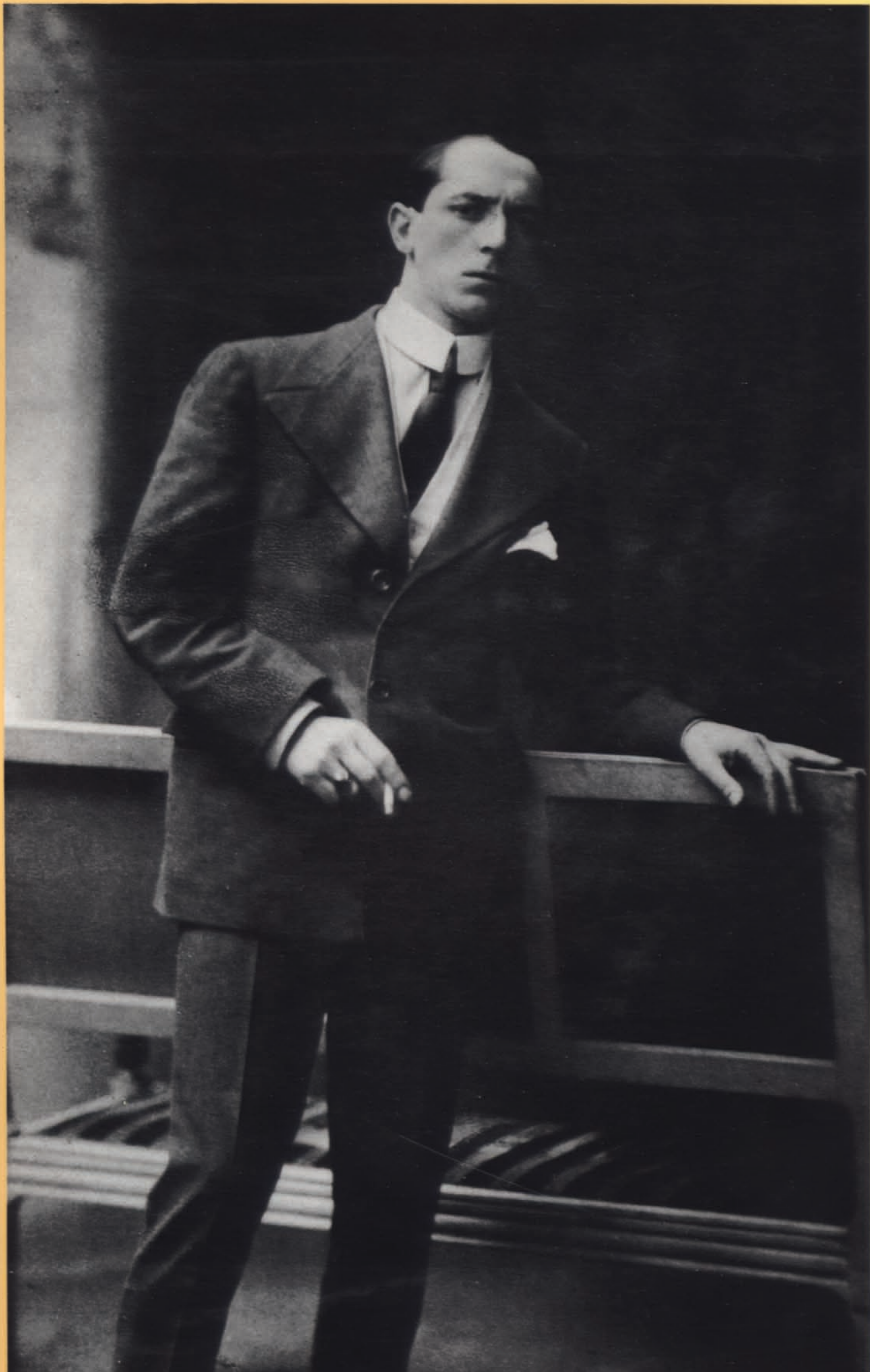
Verona 1985–86
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Rome 1987
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